



# Setting (Realistic) Salary Expectations:

## *Considerations for Your First Full-Time Job*

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**You** worked hard through years of study, internships, co-ops, extracurriculars, and part-time jobs to prepare for graduation and build your resume. Now that the tassels have turned and the caps have flown, your next chapter is about to begin—your career! As you comb through job postings, here are some factors you should consider about salary (and other benefits) during your job search.

### **WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM AN ENTRY-LEVEL JOB?**

As you begin your job search as a recent graduate, most roles you are qualified for are entry-level jobs. An entry-level job typically requires less experience, training, or education than a more senior role. However, the definition and timeframe of an entry-level role may vary depending on the company or industry. Although you may immediately have higher career or salary aspirations, entry-level jobs are often just the starting point. Companies seek to fill entry-level jobs with recent graduates or young professionals with less experience or fewer job requirements.

Consequently, these jobs may have a starting salary that is lower than expected, but these jobs will benefit

your career. In addition, entry-level jobs offer experience and networking. While getting caught up on the dollar amount when evaluating positions is easy, do not forget the career benefits of getting your foot in the door at your dream company. Having a supportive mentor can also provide tremendous benefits for your career. Gaining skills and connections through entry-level jobs is invaluable for a successful career. Consider your first position out of school as your launching pad, embracing the opportunities to gain experience, learn new skills, and grow your network.

### **WHAT SALARY AMOUNT CAN I EXPECT RIGHT OUT OF COLLEGE?**

Having a ballpark range for the salary for a starting position is essential for financial planning and budgeting.

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While setting career goals for yourself and your salary is imperative, ensuring these expectations are realistic is also vital. Using online research tools can be helpful as you begin benchmarking an average pay range. Take this number with caution; it can vary significantly based on factors such as your job responsibilities, industry, company, geographical location, and more. Cross-reference other salary reporting sources specific to your career path for a more realistic expectation.

Additionally, it is essential to consider the impact that individual company factors, such as size and culture, can have on your pay. Ultimately, recognize that experience can have an enormous influence on your salary. Adjust any salary expectations for your first role out of school accordingly. Your compensation can grow as your skills and experience increase, which comes with time in the industry. Remember that pay alone does not determine a good job or career. Don't let your starting salary be the only factor in deciding on a job.

After scouring the internet for your first job post-graduation, you may notice that some job postings list a salary. While not all employers will or are required to post salary, if you find this information, it can provide valuable context about the compensation of the role. Compare the salary range to similar positions in the field and geographic area to gather an idea of what a fair salary would be for this position based on their individual experiences and credentials. It is essential to consider that where a job seeker will fall in this range is influenced by multifaceted aspects like education, experience, skills, and the value the company feels the interviewee can bring to their business.





### DO BENEFITS MATTER?

It is not all about money. While a higher salary may initially be more appealing, compare each potential company's benefits before accepting any offers. Jobs can differ in the

benefits they provide, such as bonuses/incentive pay, their PTO or sick days policy, relocation packages, work allowances, a flexible work schedule, or remote work opportunities. Having desirable benefits such as those mentioned can lead to improved work-life balance or job satisfaction, which is of significant consideration when job hunting.

AgCareers.com polled agriculture and food employers about their staff allowances, including vehicles, cell phones, the internet, and relocation benefits.

According to the 2022 Employer Benefits Survey, the percentage of Canadian employers offering these allowances was:

	Percentage %
 Mobile Phone	54%
 Relocation	41%
 Vehicle	38%
 Internet	8%

*Note that these allowances vary by job level and by company*

### WHAT OTHER FACTORS SHOULD I CONSIDER?

Additional factors can affect your overall level of job satisfaction. AgCareers.com also surveyed candidates and employees about the importance they place on career development components and company culture. Employees & candidates report they are looking for challenging and meaningful work, professional development, and learning opportunities. These are also important but often overlooked factors to consider when job hunting.

Employers may offer a tuition assistance or reimbursement program

for those employees looking to increase their education or obtain additional degrees, which can benefit employees wanting to move up internally or within the industry. Supporting employees by providing training or certification courses can also reiterate a company's importance in investing in its employees.

Another factor to contemplate when looking for your first job post-graduation is whether a support or mentor system is in place to help you navigate the transition not only to the industry but also to the business world. A mentor is a valuable resource as you enter the early stages of your career. They are there to help you learn and can provide their expertise or guidance when needed.

Finding your first job may take a little time. While salary is a critical component, practice setting realistic expectations and reflecting on all factors, and you'll be sure to land a starting role that will set you up for future career success.

## Ready to jumpstart your career?

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