

Response to a declined job offer template

Reply graciously when a candidate turns down your offer, and leave the door open.

Updated October 15, 2026. Written and reviewed by the HRTally Research Team.

When to use this template

Losing a candidate at the offer stage stings, especially after weeks of interviews. How you respond matters more than it seems. Candidates who decline often reappear a year or two later as applicants, referrers, or customers, and they remember whether you were gracious or bitter.

Use this email to thank them, accept the decision, and, if you want to learn from it, ask one simple question about why. Many candidates will answer honestly when the question is low pressure. That answer is valuable data for your compensation and process. If you want to make one final attempt to change their mind, do it on the phone first, not in this email.

Version 1: Gracious acceptance

SUBJECT Re: your decision

Hi [Candidate first name],

Thanks for letting me know, and for being so straightforward about it. We are disappointed, of course, but we respect your decision, and I wish you every success at [New company, if shared].

If you are open to it, I would appreciate knowing what tipped the decision. It helps us improve how we hire. One or two sentences is plenty, and there's no obligation.

We enjoyed getting to know you, and our door stays open. If things change, please reach out.

All the best,
[Recruiter name]
[Title], [Company]

Version 2: Leaving room for a future role

SUBJECT Thank you, and let's stay in touch

Hi [Candidate first name],

Thank you for considering our offer so carefully. I understand, and I'm glad you found the right fit.

The team was genuinely impressed with you, especially [Specific strength]. With your permission, I will keep in touch and let you know if we open a role you might find interesting down the road.

Best of luck in the new role.

[Hiring manager name]

[Title], [Company]

Subject lines to try

- Re: your decision
- Thank you, and let's stay in touch
- Thanks for letting us know, [Candidate first name]
- Best of luck, [Candidate first name]
- Re: the [Job title] offer

How to personalize it

- Reply within a day. A long silence after a decline looks like resentment.
- Ask one optional question about the decision, not a survey.
- Have the hiring manager send a short personal note for senior candidates.
- Record the reason in your ATS so you can spot patterns.

Mistakes to avoid

- Guilt-tripping the candidate about the time the team invested.
- Asking for the competing offer details in writing.
- Making a counteroffer by email without talking first.
- Closing the door with language like we will not consider you in the future.

When to send it

Within one business day of the decline. Then move quickly to your second choice, whose interest may be fading. Your post-interview rejection for other finalists should wait until the replacement offer is accepted.

Before you hit send

- The job title, pay range, and dates match what is in your applicant tracking system.
- Every placeholder in brackets has been replaced or deleted.
- Candidates who will be interviewed or assessed are told how to request an accommodation.

- Nothing in the message comments on age, family, health, or other protected characteristics.
- A real person is named as the contact, with a reply address someone checks.

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