# **Checklist: What to Do When You Receive a Contingent Job Offer**

### **1. Request a Formal Written Offer Immediately**

Do not proceed based on verbal commitments or informal communication. Get the contingent offer in writing and review it carefully.

**Action Items:**

* Ask for a formal offer letter with all contingencies clearly listed
* Identify each specific requirement, such as background checks, reference checks, drug testing, licensing, or approvals
* Confirm the timelines and deadlines for each contingency
* Look for unclear or open-ended phrases like "pending HR review" that need clarification

### **2. Evaluate the Nature and Risk Level of the Contingencies**

Determine which contingencies are routine and which could delay or cancel the offer. Know what is within your control and what is not.

**Action Items:**

* List all contingencies and classify them as low, moderate, or high risk
* Flag any vague conditions like “pending final approval” that could be used to withdraw the offer
* Understand how long each condition typically takes in your industry
* Consider the employer’s track record, if known. Some industries are more cautious or bureaucratic than others

### **3. Use the Contingent Window to Negotiate Key Terms**

Many candidates wait until contingencies are cleared before negotiating, which is often too late. Your influence is strongest before you fully comply.

**Action Items:**

* Clarify salary, benefits, remote arrangements, and start date now, not later
* Ask, “What flexibility is there if the background check process extends past the proposed start date?”
* Use this time to raise reasonable questions about relocation support, onboarding, or equipment needs, if applicable
* Ensure all agreed-upon changes are documented in an updated offer

### **4. Assess Alignment with Your Career Strategy**

While waiting for contingencies to clear, reassess whether this role fits your long-term goals. Just because you got the offer doesn’t mean it’s the best move.

**Action Items:**

* Ask yourself whether this role supports your 12- to 24-month career vision
* Compare the offer against others you may be considering
* Reflect on the employer’s communication and transparency during this phase
* Decide whether it’s worth pausing your job search or whether to continue exploring options

### **5. Set a Professional Follow-Up Cadence**

Candidates often feel awkward about checking in, but silence can lead to miscommunication or missed updates. Set a cadence that keeps you top of mind without overstepping.

**Action Items:**

* Send a thank-you email within 24 hours acknowledging the offer and summarizing next steps
* Confirm who to contact for each step of the contingency process
* Follow up every five to seven business days with brief, focused questions or status checks
* Avoid vague inquiries. Be specific, such as, “Has the background check cleared, or is anything else needed from my end?”

### **6. Continue Your Job Search Discreetly**

Do not assume the role is yours until all contingencies are cleared. Staying active gives you leverage and protects you from delays or reversals.

**Action Items:**

* Keep applying to other roles quietly
* Avoid publicly announcing your new role until it’s finalized
* Identify a deadline where, if contingencies are not met, you will move on
* Maintain relationships with other prospective employers in case this offer stalls

### **7. Prepare for Onboarding Ahead of Confirmation**

Employers notice candidates who show readiness and professionalism, even during a conditional phase. Be the person they’re glad they picked.

**Action Items:**

* Gather necessary documents early, such as IDs, NBI clearance, or certifications
* Review company materials, core values, and leadership profiles
* Prepare relevant questions to ask once hired
* Show continued interest and readiness without assuming the role prematurely

### **8. Know When to Withdraw and How to Do It Professionally**

Some contingent offers are not worth waiting for. If delays or red flags accumulate, protect your time and career momentum by stepping away with professionalism.

**Action Items:**

* Set a personal deadline for how long you will wait for contingencies to be resolved
* Draft a professional withdrawal message that leaves the door open for future conversations
* Notify the employer if you decide to pursue other confirmed opportunities
* Leave on a positive note to preserve long-term relationships

### **Final Note**

Receiving a contingent job offer means you are close, but not yet confirmed. How you handle this in-between phase speaks volumes to employers and protects your interests. Use this checklist to stay in control of your career and position yourself as a confident, prepared professional from day one.