



Negotiating Salary & Benefits

Let's face it, salary negotiation is unpleasant! Most job seekers feel anxious, embarrassed and uncomfortable when the time comes to discuss salaries. Advice such as "never bring up the issue of salary, let the interviewer say it first," is rarely helpful if you don't have any idea of how to respond when the topic does come up. This handout is designed to give you some basic information about negotiating salaries and benefits as part of your job search. For additional information, please refer to the list of books and websites at the end of this document, or talk to a career counselor.

What do I need to know in order to negotiate a salary?

1. Determine the market rate salary range for this type of position in this particular industry.
2. Prepare a budget to determine your financial needs.
3. Decide, **BEFORE YOU GO INTO AN INTERVIEW**, what salary you **WANT** to earn, what you **NEED** to live on, and what you will be willing to **SETTLE FOR**.
4. Be realistic: entry-level salaries are less negotiable than salaries for mid-level or executive positions.
5. Practice your salary negotiation skills with a friend, or during a Career Connection videotaped mock interview session.
6. Document your skills and accomplishments, and be prepared to talk about them.
7. Don't be the first to mention salary during the interview, and use the negotiating tips listed below when the topic does come up.
8. Never say, "I need at least ___ dollars." Provide the interviewer with a salary range.
9. Don't worry about what your friends are making, the employer certainly isn't.
10. Never lie about your salary history.
11. Relax; it's natural to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable discussing salary.
12. Once you have accepted a job offer and salary level, be sure to get it in writing.

How can I find out the market rate salary range?

Uncovering salary information is not as difficult as it may seem. Try the following resources:

1. Review the collection of salary survey information in your college Career Services Office, Career Connection and on line.
2. Use job listings, which indicate salaries for related positions.
3. Ask your friends and networking contacts.
4. Call employment agencies or executive search firms.
5. Contact professional associations.
6. Talk to other job seekers.

7. Review business and trade periodicals (i.e., Working Woman magazine publishes an annual salary survey; the Wall Street Journal National Business Employment Weekly publishes salary updates).
8. Check out the on-line salary surveys through <http://jobsmart.org/tools/salary/index.htm>

Are salaries really negotiable?

Yes, and no. The degree to which a salary is negotiable depends on the position, the manager, the organization, and your perceived value. Most entry-level positions have set salaries that are subject to very little if any negotiation--perhaps a few hundred dollars of negotiating room. Mid-level positions typically have salary ranges of between 10 and 20 percent (i.e., a job paying \$30,000 a year may have a salary range between \$27,000 and \$33,000).

Employers will negotiate within the range, but will rarely exceed it unless you are an exceptional candidate. Most state and federal government jobs have rigid, non-negotiable salary scales based on education and experience. In general, the higher-level management and executive positions offer the greatest opportunities for negotiation.

How can I handle questions about salary during an interview?

Most books about how to find a job contain entire chapters on negotiating salaries. Here are just a few tips to get you started:

1. If asked: "What are your salary requirements?" There are multiple ways to respond depending on your personality, goals and the situation. Summarize the requirements of the position as you understand them, and then ask the interviewer for the normal salary range in his/her company for that type of position. Or, respond with "My research indicates that the typical salary range for this position is \$_____ to \$_____. I feel that, in light of my _____ (qualifications, education, experience, accomplishments), I would be qualified for a salary around \$_____ (dollar estimate or tighter range within the original range).
2. If asked: "How much did you earn on your last job?" Tell the interviewer that you would prefer learning more about the current position before you discuss compensation, and that you are confident you will be able to reach a mutual agreement about salary at that time.
3. If told: "The salary range for this position is \$22,000 to \$27,000, is that what you were expecting?" Tell the interviewer that it does come near what you were expecting, and then offer a range which places the top of the employer's range into the bottom of your range (i.e., I was thinking in terms of \$27,000 to \$32,000). Remember: be sure that the range you were thinking about is consistent with what you learned about market rate for that position.
4. If told; "The salary is \$1900 per month." Try not to look excited or disappointed. Simply repeat the salary, look up as though you were thinking about it, and pause. Don't worry about the silence; give the employer an opportunity to increase the offer. If the interviewer does not change the offer, try the response suggested in #3 above.

Introduction to Benefits

In addition to salary, take into consideration the employee benefit plan when evaluating an offer made by a company. In today's job market many employee benefits are considered standard--they come with the job and are not subject to negotiation. However, an increasing number of employers are offering flexible benefit packages, which allow employees a variety of choices regarding their benefits. Most entry-level employees can expect a basic benefit package consisting of:

- Health insurance, Dental insurance, Disability insurance
- Life insurance, Paid vacation time, Paid sick leave

- Paid holidays

A more comprehensive benefit package might include some or all of the following:

- Bonuses
- Child and day-care services
- Company car, Cost-of-living adjustments
- Desirable office, Education, and training programs
- Expense accounts, Flexible work schedule
- Maternity/Parental leave, Parking
- Professional membership dues, Profit sharing plans
- Relocation expenses, Retirement plans
- Savings plans, Special equipment (i.e. computer)
- Stock Options, Supplementary pay plans

Termination agreement (severance pay), Unpaid leave