



NEGOTIATING SALARY AND BENEFITS

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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 do so first," is rarely helpful if you don't have any idea of how to respond when the topic does come up. This flyer provides basic information about negotiating salaries and benefits as part of your job search. For additional information, refer to the list of useful websites at the end of the flyer, or talk to a career counselor.

Are salaries really negotiable?

Yes, and no. Negotiability is dependent upon the position, the manager, the organization, and your perceived value. Most entry-level positions have salaries that are set in stone, or nearly so, with 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 \$40,000 a year may have a salary range between \$37,000 and \$45,000).

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

How should I handle salary questions during an interview?

1. **"What are your salary requirements?"** There are a number of ways to respond, dependent upon your personality, goals, and the situation. You could summarize the requirements of the position as you understand them, and then ask the interviewer for the normal salary range in the company for that type of position. Or, respond with, "My research shows that the typical salary range for this position is \$_____ to \$_____. I feel that, in light of my _____ (qualifications, education, experience, accomplishments), I am qualified for a salary around \$_____." (Fill in a number, or a small range within the original range).

2. **"How much did you earn on your last job?"** You could answer directly, or you could say something more vague like, "I earned around \$15 per hour." Or, you could 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 when/if you are actually offered a job.

3. The interviewer says, **“The salary range for this position is \$35,000 to \$38,000 – is that what you were expecting?”** Tell him/her that it does come near your expectations, and then suggest a range that places the top of the employer’s range into the bottom of your range (“I was thinking in terms of something between \$37,000 to \$40,000.”) Be sure that the range you are thinking about is consistent with what you have learned about the market rate for that position.

4. If you are told, “The salary is \$2,500 per month,” try not to look either excited or disappointed. Repeat the salary, look up as though you are thinking about it, and pause. Don’t worry about the silence as it may give the employer the opportunity to increase the offer. If the interviewer does not change the offer, try the response suggested in #3 above.

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 industry in this geographical area. Remember that the cost of living varies widely across the country.
2. Prepare a budget to determine your financial needs.
3. Decide before you go into the interview what 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 salary negotiations with a friend.
6. Document your skills and accomplishments, and be prepared to talk about them convincingly.
7. Do not be the one to bring up the salary issue during the interview!
8. Never say, “I need at least \$____.” Provide a realistic salary range.
9. Do not be influenced by what your friends are making.
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?

1. Review the collection of salary survey information at the Career Center as well as salary websites that are listed at the end of the flyer.
2. Thoroughly read job descriptions for available jobs. Some of them will indicate the salary or the salary range for the position.
3. Ask your mentors and networking contacts; ask other job seekers.
4. Contact employment agencies, executive search firms and professional associations.
5. Review business and trade periodicals in print and online. Many publish annual salary surveys.

A word about benefits

In addition to salary, take into consideration the employee benefit plan when evaluating a job offer. Many employee benefits are considered standard - they come with the job and are not subject to negotiation. However, many employers are now offering flexible benefit packages, which allow employees some choice. Most entry-level employees can expect a basic benefit package consisting of:

- Health insurance, dental insurance, disability insurance, life insurance
- Paid vacation time, paid holidays, paid sick leave

A more comprehensive package may include some or all of the following;

- Expense account, company car, bonuses
- Cost-of-living adjustments
- Child and daycare services
- Flexible work schedule
- Maternity/paternity leave
- Free parking
- Paid education and training programs
- Professional membership dues
- Retirement plan (pension)
- Stock options, profit-sharing plan
- Unpaid leave time

Useful websites

- <http://jobsmart.org/index.php> Click on “salary info”
- <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/salaryinformation/a/salarynegotiat.htm>
- www.salary.com
- www.careeronestop.org/SalariesBenefits/SalariesBenefits.aspx
- www.eriesi.com
- <http://rileyguide.com/salguides.html>
- www.homefair.com

Good luck!