Salary Negotiation

For most students, salary is a principal factor in evaluating an offer. In addition to helping you determine the viability of living on the offered salary, knowing your costs gives you the knowledge to negotiate salary if appropriate. Remember, expenses and taxes will vary depending on where you live. The salary calculator at salary.com can be used to compare salaries in different locations.

4 Basic Rules During Salary Negotiation

Rule # 1: Avoid discussing salary until you have a job offer.
Politely avoid the question or turn it back to them:
✓ “I’d really like to hear more about the opportunity before we discuss salary.”
✓ “Although salary is an important factor, it’s not my main motivator, so I’m flexible in that regard.”
✓ “Is there an established range for the position?”

If an employer insists that you give a salary requirement, provide a wide range and let them know you are flexible:
✓ Example: “My understanding is that professionals in this field and at this level typically earn $28,000 to $35,000. My salary needs are comparable and I would be happy to discuss them further when an offer is extended.”

Rule # 2: Know the salary ranges for your industry and position type.
✓ Research salaries for your field, level of experience, and geographic region through Web sites such as Salary.com, Indeed.com, and PayScale.com.
✓ Politely inquire about average salaries when networking or conducting informational interviews.
✓ Review salary guides available in the Career Development library.

Rule # 3: When the offer comes, be enthusiastic, but don’t be hasty.
✓ Convey your appreciation for the offer and continued enthusiasm for the organization and position, and feel comfortable asking for a day or two to consider the offer.
✓ Fully understand what is being offered and consider requesting your offer in writing; employers are generally willing to e-mail details.
✓ Review all of the details of your package, including salary, bonuses, leave, and health benefits.
✓ Weigh the entire package, invite input from trusted advisors, make an informed decision, and prepare your response.

Rule # 4: If you choose to negotiate, prepare your counteroffer.
✓ Negotiate your salary according to the skills and contributions you’ll bring to the organization – not according to your desired earnings.
✓ Highlight your research findings, reiterate your unique qualifications, and prepare a response such as: “I believe that a salary of $32,000 plus your generous benefits package is more in line with the skills and experience that I bring to this position.”
If there are multiple aspects of your offer that you need to address, discuss them all in the same conversation.

Practice your counteroffer, similar to a mock interview, with your career advisor or other confidant.

12 Tips to Negotiating Salary in an Interview

1. **Be prepared** – Before going to the interview, it’s crucial to research the company and salary range for the position you are applying for persons with your background and experience. Have a salary range in mind and be prepared to discuss these figures once salary negotiation has come up.

2. **Know your absolute bottom line** – Know what your minimum salary range must be to support the life you want to live. So 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.

3. **Market yourself** – Emphasize the reasons you should get the offer. Document your skills and accomplishments, and be prepared to talk about them.

4. **Never discuss salary until you have a job offer** – If you do, you could price yourself out of a job before the employer is convinced they need you. If pressed by the interviewers, tell them you’re flexible and would be happy to discuss salary when you learn more about the job.

5. **Get the employer to disclose salary before you do** – Don’t be the first to mention salary during the interview. Let the employer bring it up as many times as necessary until you feel ready.

6. **The best response is one that returns the employer’s ball back into his court** – You can say, “what kind of salary range are you working with?” or “Well, I’d like to make as much as other employees with my qualifications.” or “What is a typical salary for this position?”

7. **Do not disclose past salary** – Once your past salary is on the table, your negotiating edge goes out the window. By not disclosing exactly what your current salary is or exactly what it would take to get you to leave your current job, you’ll force a potential employer to make its best offer.

8. **Don’t forget the value of benefits and perks when negotiating a salary** – Sometimes the salary offered may seem low, low enough for you to turn down the job. Benefits and perks can add up to 40 percent to your basic salary. Some benefits are fixed, but others are negotiable such as stock options, bonuses, employee discounts, training, holiday time and sick leave.
9. **Make your salary discussion a friendly experience** – Be amicable when discussing salary. You should make the employer feel that you are on the same side and working together to find a package that would satisfy everyone's needs.

10. **Don't say yes to an offer right away** – Be enthusiastic and appreciative when you get the job offer, but ask for at least 24 hours to respond. This gives you time to get over your initial joy at being selected. If you feel the salary is insufficient, express your concern to the employer when asking for time to consider the offer. You'll find out right away whether the salary quoted is set in stone or is flexible.

11. **Get it in writing** – Once you have accepted a job offer and salary level, be sure to get it in writing.

12. **Declining an offer** – If you decide not to accept the offer, make sure you leave on the best of terms. Treat every offer seriously and graciously. You can never tell who you may be doing business with in the future so don’t burn any bridges.