

You have been offered a job. Now it is time to focus on salary and benefits with your prospective employer. Salary negotiation is a conversation based on mutual agreement and an outcome that both parties are satisfied with, not a confrontation. Remain positive, flexible, and focused on how your skills match the employer's needs.

Feeling stressed? Salary negotiation can often be more uncomfortable than the job search itself, but preparation and practice will help. Before you begin negotiating, know what you WANT to earn, what you NEED to live on, and what you will SETTLE FOR, as well as what fair market value is for your skills and experience. Be willing to consider making tradeoffs to increase the offer; if an employer offers a lower salary, consider negotiating benefits that offset the difference.

Preparation

Preparation is an important step in understanding yourself and what you should look at when evaluating a job offer:

- Know what your bottom line is and have a range in mind. (i.e. \$40,000-\$45,000)
- Prepare a budget of essential expenses to determine what you need to earn.
- Find out your market value for this type of position in this field. Remember to compare salaries to jobs that have similar duties and responsibilities in similar geographic/cost of living regions.
- Practice salary negotiation with a friend, family member, or Career Services staff.
- Try to find out what the company's maximum salary is. Assess the economic conditions of the company, their physical location, competitors, position in the market (do they lag, match or lead in terms of salaries).
- Understand that when entering a new field your ability to negotiate salary may be more restricted.

Keep in mind:

- Do not make negotiations personal. Understand that the person you are negotiating with may not be the one with the power to make salary decisions. If this is the person who will be your supervisor, this is the beginning of your relationship with them - keep it positive, professional, and focused on a mutually satisfying outcome.
- Know your skills, experience and accomplishments and be able to articulate them with value statements (below) to demonstrate your market value.

Consider:

Create "value statements" with statements relevant to the skills and result this employer is interested in, using the language they use in the job description when possible:

"I accomplished ___*accomplishment*___ using my ___*skill(s)*___ which benefited the company/organization/club by ___*results*___."

Understanding Your Market Value

Are your skills and experiences comparable to other job seekers in your chosen field? Make sure salary comparisons are based on those with similar backgrounds and geographic region. Many resources are available:

- Online: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Salary.com, Glassdoor, Payscale.com
- Job listings of similar positions that include salary information
- Your network of friends, family, alumni, and other professionals
- Professional Associations
- National Association of Colleges and Employers

Remember:

- Verify that any sites you use are based on employer-reported, government or Census data for accurate results and know that you may be asked to cite your source.
- Use government or industry websites if needed for alternative job titles for your research.
- Market value is also a factor of supply and demand - how many people are in the job market with your skills and experience, as well as the current labor market and variable factors in the economic climate.

Negotiations

Negotiations are not a one-sided exchange but a conversation between an employer and prospective candidate. Remember that both sides need to feel satisfied in the negotiation discussion. Understand that most employers will probably agree to what is fair within the constraints of their budget. Solid industry research can give you a strong foundation to begin negotiations. Do not start negotiations before the company makes an offer.

In some states, including MA, you cannot be asked for your salary history prior to being made an offer including compensation. However, you can be asked for your salary expectations. If possible, deflect this conversation until later in the process.

If the topic of salary is brought up during interviews there are three ways to approach this:

1. Try to delay the response and wait to discuss salary until you have more information about the position and you have established yourself as their top choice.
2. Ask the employer based on your skills and background what is their typical salary range for this position.
3. Give a non-specific response about fair market value or the right match between responsibilities and standards in the industry; if pressed for a number, use a range (mid-50's)

Tips

- Do not ramble – answer the question, then stop. Allow the employer time to process your response and reply.
- Keep in mind that fringe benefits may be negotiable.
- Know if the position has set salaries, ranges, or wages (e.g., government or union positions); these will not be negotiable.
- If possible, have documented evidence as to why your skills and experience warrant an increase.
- Keep the focus on the reasons you deserve more, not on why you want more; ie, you deserve more because you have a specific skill set or have experience, not you need more because you have student loans or your roommate moved out.
- Anticipate an employer's objections to your negotiations and prepare and practice your responses.
- If the employer cannot meet your requests, ask when they typically do reviews and see if an earlier review and salary adjustment could be considered.
- Understand sometimes you need to walk away from negotiations if an agreement cannot be reached. If you have any doubts or concerns, thank the company for their time and politely, professionally, and promptly decline the offer.
- Do not burn bridges as circumstances can change and other opportunities may arise that could be a better fit.
- Always ask for the offer in writing.
- Never accept the job on the spot even if it is acceptable to you. Ask for a few days to consider the offer. Consider the entire package; benefits can add up to 30% to your total compensation.

Negotiation conversation examples:

"Thank you for meeting with me to discuss your offer. I am looking forward to joining the team. Do you have any flexibility in the salary?" According to my research, the typical salary range for somebody with my qualifications in this role is \$40,000-\$45,000"

"Thank you for the job offer. I have reviewed the salary package, which I am happy with, but had some questions about the benefits package, especially telecommuting options."

"I'm very excited about this opportunity. However, I would like to talk about compensation as I believe I would be a great asset to the team especially since I [insert value statement]. Based on my research, can we consider a salary in the range of \$40,000-\$45,000?"

If your negotiated salary is below your target but above your walk-away point, consider a response like:

"Thank you for our discussion about the salary offer. While we could not meet my salary expectations, I am open to discussing benefits to see if we can make up some of the difference. One thing I would value a lot is transportation assistance for my commute. Is this something we can consider?"

Possible Fringe Benefits

Medical Insurance	Employee Assistance Programs	401k plans
Dental Insurance	Vacation	Pension Plans
Eye Care Insurance	Overtime	Profit Sharing
Life Insurance	Paid Holidays	Reviews and salary progression
Tuition Reimbursement	Parking/Commuting	Stock Options/ESOPs
Accidental Death Insurance	Reimbursements	Health Club Membership
Dependent Care	Sick/Personal Days	Business Travel Insurance
Disability Insurance	Relocation Packages	

- Know that not everything can be negotiated. **You do not always have to negotiate.**
- Does the offer meet your predetermined requirements?
- Do you like the company, the position, your supervisor, employees, and offer?
- If you had the option, would you ask for something else?