

# When to Negotiate your Salary

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Our office fields quite a few of these questions from recent grads, and it is important to get paid for what you do, but I also wanted to equip you with an understanding of what is at stake if you feel the need to negotiate your salary.

The key in any negotiation process is to first determine whether you are willing to walk away from the job offer. In our current employment climate, when there are more people looking for work than jobs available, you need to think hard about the message you are sending the employer.

## **Ask the Hard Questions:**

### **When Should I Bring up Salary?**

*During the Interview...*

Never ever make salary the first issue during an interview. Employers want to see that you are interested in the mission of the organization and how you can contribute. It is appropriate to inquire about the salary range but please do it humbly and don't get aggressive. An excellent way to word this would be, "Can you share with me the salary range for this position?" "Is there any flexibility?"

You are not obligated to accept the first salary you are offered, but if they ask you what salary you are looking for, you need to have an answer. Do your research and understand the typical salary range for that position. Be aware that if your answer is beyond their range, you may not be considered for the position. Most companies have done their research on industry and geographic salary ranges, so most entry level offerings should be in line with industry standards.

*Once you've been working...*

Generally, it is not good policy to bring up your salary before your employer does. Again, it can reflect a lack of commitment to company. Ideally, wait until it's time to do a performance review, then bring the discussion of an increase. Instead of being demanding, bring up the subject as a question. For instance, if you have had a stellar performance evaluation, ask "Will it be possible to do a salary review mid-year?"

If you work in a smaller organization without formalized performance reviews, request one.

## **What?**

What type of job are you applying for? Is it an entry level job for which there are hundreds of other applicants waiting in line? What is the salary range for the position within your location? The going rate in Peoria, may be very different from that in Boston and most salary tables take geography into account. Check with online services like [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com) so you know what others holding your position are making.

For those working in the non-profit realm, there are creative ways to negotiate your compensation package depending on what you feel is important:

- **Flexibility.** Will the company allow you to work from home part of the time or to work non-traditional hours?
- **Time-off.** Instead of more pay, will the company grant you more paid time off?
- **More frequent reviews.** This allows you to prove yourself to the company and to achieve goals contingent to requesting an increase.
- **Augment.** Will the company allow you to supplement your income during non-work hours? Example: you are a therapist in a battered women's shelter during the day and see private clients in the evening.

### **Why?**

It is important to get paid what you are worth, but again, ask yourself: why am I asking for more money? If it has anything to do with ego, then stop. Are you still happy with the company and with the job? If you are asking for money as just an excuse to stay at a dead end job, then stop and assess your motivation. Money notwithstanding, maybe it's time to leave.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How long have I been with the company?
- Have I proven myself?
- What is the salary range for this position in this location?
- What are the consequences if my request is denied? Will I alienate my boss? Am I willing to leave this job?

### **Where?**

Make sure the results of your compensation negotiations are in writing. If you have successfully negotiated a higher rate of pay, then make sure the agreement is reflected in writing and is documented in your personnel files.

### **Please Don't**

- **Make Demands.** Make your request open ended or you may find yourself in a corner.
- **Have an over-inflated sense of your worth.**