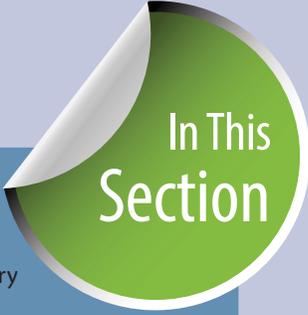


OFFERS AND NEGOTIATIONS

For many people, discussing salary is a nerve-wracking experience. However, when managed correctly, it can also contribute to a positive and more fulfilling professional relationship between you and your future employer.



In This Section

You will learn...

- How to respond when asked for salary requirements or salary history in an application or in an interview.
- About negotiation strategies.

Why Negotiate Salary?

Employers expect that you will negotiate your salary responsibly and respectfully. Discussing salary details too early or choosing not to negotiate your salary with a potential employer could mean accepting a salary lower than your level of education and experience dictate, of peers in your profession, and that an employer was willing to pay.

To negotiate salary, determine the types and amounts of compensation that a person with your level of experience, education, skills, and other qualifications can command in your industry and organization, by pursuing critical research and discussing salary details in a timely manner.

Salary Requirements

Salary requirements are best discussed when an employer makes you a job offer. You are in the best position to bargain after the employer has determined that you're the best person for the job. Be sure to give the employer a salary range, not a specific figure. Sometimes employers insist on asking about your salary requirements or expectations early in the interview. If this happens, consider the following strategies:

- Emphasize your abilities, the match between you and the organization's needs, and your expectations that the salary will be competitive.
- Try postponing discussion of salary until the interviewer is prepared to make you an offer (e.g., "I'd like to hold off discussion of salary until I have a fuller understanding of the nature and scope of the responsibilities of this position.").
- If you must give a figure, give a range that you are comfortable with, based on your research.
- Try to get the employer to mention a salary figure first by turning the question back to him or her. Remind the employer of the skills you'll bring to the position and note that salary is negotiable. Ask what he or she had in mind in terms of salary.
- See the Career Library or www.salaryexpert.com.

SALARY RESOURCES

See salary information at careers.gmu.edu/links. Click on "Prepare to Job Hunt" and scroll down to salary sites.

EVALUATING JOB OFFERS

- Take time to evaluate all the factors involved in a job offer.
- Employers generally give candidates between one and two weeks to decide. This time span may vary depending on your needs and those of the employer, but allow at least 24 hours for evaluation before accepting any position.
- Ask for a copy of the job offer in writing.
- If you are asked to decide sooner than you wish, ask for an extension, which may or may not be granted. It is perfectly reasonable to say that you have other interviews scheduled that you want to attend before making your final decision if that is the case.
- Follow up with other organizations that are considering you for

employment in which you still have interest. Explain that you have received another offer, and because of your interest in their organization or position, you are following up to learn the status of your candidacy.

- If unsure about whether to accept a position, use your career counselor as a sounding board.

Salary History

If you are asked to include your salary history with your resume, you could include a salary range rather than a specific amount. You can list your salary history in your cover letter without itemizing. For example, you could say, "I am currently earning in the mid-forties." Your salary history can also be listed on a separate salary history page and enclosed with your resume and cover letter.

- Be honest. It's easy for potential employers to verify your salary with previous employers.
- You can also say that your salary requirements are flexible. That may help keep you in the running for the position and will give you some flexibility when negotiating compensation later on
- Timing is everything. You should only discuss salary after a job offer has been made to you. You are in the best position to bargain after the position has been offered to you by a potential employer.

Salary Requests during the Interview

If an employer wants to discuss salary during an interview before making an offer, consider using one of the following responses:

- Option 1: *"Since salary is only one piece of the puzzle for me, I'd like to find out more about the job before determining my salary requirements. This sounds like an excellent opportunity so far. Can you tell me a little more about...[insert an area where you have additional questions]?"*
- Option 2: *"Thank you for asking. Would you mind telling me the average salary for this position or similar positions within your agency? My requirements are flexible, and I'd like to consider those rates before deciding on an exact range."*
- Option 3: *"I prefer to have a full understanding of everything a job has to offer before discussing salary. With that said, do you mind if we delay this conversation until we've talked a bit more about the position itself and where we are in the interview process? (Follow up with specific questions.)"*

If an employer insists that you give your salary requirements or history and you have already politely and respectfully indicated that you would like to postpone the discussion, be prepared to have this discussion. Further avoidance will only make you seem resistant and defiant. Again, provide the employer with a salary range, for example \$50,000 to \$60,000.

Salary Negotiation Strategies

DETERMINE YOUR SALARY

Do Your Research

- Determine an appropriate salary for your position by becoming familiar with the organization's typical salary range for that position, in addition to their usual benefits package. Salary is one piece of a complete compensation package, which can also include health insurance, time off, flexible hours, loan forgiveness, technology and equipment (company computers, phones, cars), opportunities for advancement, and bonuses.
- Pursue market research and determine what similar organizations offer for that particular position. (Research your salary range in various organizations, on salary websites, with professionals in your field, and with individuals and alumni employed by the organization with which you are seeking employment.)
- Know what you are worth and what the current market will bear. Know the agency's size/budget.
- Visit salary calculator websites to obtain accurate and current information.

Understand Your Value

When you accept a position you are agreeing to make a significant investment in the organization. It is realistic and fair to expect that organization to make an equitable investment in you. As long as you are tactful and realistic, it is unlikely that an employer who has a vested interest in you will withdraw an offer because you tried to negotiate a better compensation package.

Salaries are normally assigned to positions rather than to individuals. Your task is to negotiate a higher salary because you as an individual will perform better than the average person in the position.

Be Aware

Most offers are negotiable. Do not assume that an employer's first offer is the best offer. Many employers will initiate salary discussions by proposing a salary figure that is at the lower end of the position's allocated pay scale. This is to allow room for the candidate to negotiate.



Quick Link

Salary.com

Online salary information.

Salaryexpert.com

Employee provided data from 10 million job incumbents.

Glassdoor.com

Search millions of job listings and see company salaries, reviews, and inside connections for any company.

salary.money.cnn.com

CNN Money.

bestplaces.net, relojournal.com, virtualrelocation.com

Compare cost of living.

paycheckcity.com

Paycheck calculator.