



CAREER SERVICES / SALARY NEGOTIATION

OVERVIEW

So you are heading into job interviews and want to prepare for getting that job offer. Excellent news! This phase of the interview process can be the most daunting to any job seeker. Going in prepared is the key to success. We've created this guide to support you in doing effective salary research and approaching the negotiation with care.

WHEN TO TALK ABOUT SALARY

For most job opportunities at the early stage of your career (first ten years), you should ideally wait until the job offer is pending to discuss salary. There are two main reasons why you should wait:

1. After the interview process is complete, the employer may believe you are worth even more than they had originally planned.
2. You avoid the risk of alienating employers with salary requirements before they have decided they must have you.

However, sometimes employers may ask what your desired salary range is during the interview process. Before interviewing, you should prepare for this question by

1. Researching typical salaries for someone with your experience going into this type of job **and**
2. Preparing a comfortable way for you to postpone answering this question until a later point if you think the question is premature.

DOING SALARY RESEARCH

Before you negotiate your salary, you need to have an objective measurement of what you're worth on the open market. By providing facts and figures backed up by research, you can objectively show what someone in a similar position typically makes. Remember to look at comparable job titles, companies and geographic locations, if possible.

Go Online

Here are some good sources for researching salaries:

[NACE Salary Calculator](#)

[Salary.com](#)

[PayScale Salary Survey](#)

[Glassdoor Salary Search](#)

[Indeed](#)

Research Your Field

Next, try specific websites and blogs related to your field or career, to see what they say about salaries. Be sure to note if your industry is going through a tough financial time, if the organization has dealt with layoffs or recent financial woes, or, conversely, if they are on a hiring spree or just got a round of funding.

Look at Your Experience

Do take into consideration what you made at your last position and how much of a step up this new job might be. What will you bring to the job that is unique? How have you proven your worth in the past? Self-reflection can be an important part of your salary research and you can include this in what to say during your salary meeting.

Ask Others

While straight up asking people what they make may not be the best tactic, if you know someone who has been in the field for a while, you can ask about starting salaries or offer a suggestion: “I’ve found that \$40,000 is about average for this position I’m interviewing for. Does that sound right to you?”

POSTPONING YOUR ANSWER TO THE SALARY QUESTION

In general, if you can avoid sharing your specific salary expectation during the interview phase, it will ultimately be better for you. In some instances, if the employer has provided a salary *range* up front, for the position, you may be asked about your comfort with that range, as it may be fairly set. It will be important for you to show your understanding and acceptance of this range. At the same time, if asked about your specific salary expectation before being offered the position, possible responses include:

1. “I’d prefer to discuss salary after I learn more about the responsibilities of the job and we can determine if I am a strong fit for your organization”
2. “I would wish to be compensated in line with the skills and abilities I have to offer your organization”
3. “What range did you have in mind?” (as follow-up, if all else fails)

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SALARY NEGOTIATION

Determine Your Ideal Salary Range

What is an appropriate salary range for people entering into the type of job you are pursuing with a similar level of experience? After you’ve done your research and assessed your unique value, have a range in mind when you go into an interview, typically separated by \$5,000-\$10,000 (for e.g. \$42,000-52,000).

Setting and Location Matters

Determine how much money you really need or want. Similar jobs in different settings may have different salaries. For example, non-profit organizations may pay less than a large consulting company. Salaries will also differ based on location – remember that cities may have very different costs-of-living. Your salary research should uncover those geographic differences and you need to understand the context of the position.

Determine How Important Salary Really Is

How important is the salary to you in deciding whether to accept a job? If your dream job pays less than you would like, it may still be worth doing for experience or for opportunities it could open up in the future. Would you be ready to make that call for the right opportunity?

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

Take Time to Think About It

You do not have to accept a job offer immediately. Accepting a job offer is a big decision. Know when they have made their final offer, then confirm the offer and give yourself some time to think about it

Get it in Writing

It is best to receive your offer in writing. That way there is less room for miscommunication. If you are offered a position over the phone or in person, it is reasonable to politely ask for the offer in writing.

Don't Appear Greedy

If you really want the job – don't appear greedy! However, don't be a pushover. Before you start a job is the optimal time for salary negotiation, and will have real consequences for your salary progression over the years.

Benefits Matter Too

When comparing positions, it is important to look at more than just the salary. Explore other components of your compensation and benefits, which may include insurance coverage, holiday pay and sick time, relocation assistance, bonuses, performance reviews, etc.

The Happiness Factor

In addition to exploring different positions and negotiating salaries, keep in mind that you want a job that you will enjoy. If you will be miserable, but making more money, it may not be worth it. So avoid boxing yourself in by focusing on a specific salary. If the “perfect” job comes along, you may be willing to sacrifice that \$3,000.

Think about all the aspects of a job that are important to you. This may include tangible and intangible things such as:

- Interesting and meaningful work
- Relationship with co-workers
- Length of commute
- Opportunity for advancement
- Training and skill building

Sometimes the Salary is Set

Some positions have no room for salary negotiation. For example, fellowships come with a set salary or stipend for your time and they cannot be negotiated. Know when it is appropriate to try to negotiate and when it is not.

SUMMARY

The bottom line is that you DO have leverage in the negotiation of a job offer. Confidence comes when you have done your research, you know what's important to you, and you can speak clearly about the value you bring to the organization. You are worth EVERY penny and then some. Good luck!