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# NEGOTIATING SALARY & BENEFITS

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Most job seekers feel anxious, embarrassed and uncomfortable when the time comes to discuss salaries. Advice such as “Never bring up the issue of salary; let the interviewer say it first,” rarely helps if you don’t have any idea of how to respond when the topic does come up. This handout gives you some basic information about negotiating salaries and benefits as part of your job search.

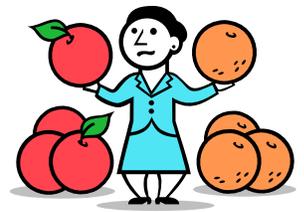
## The Fundamentals of Salary Negotiation

1. Determine the market rate salary range for this type of position in this particular Industry.
2. Prepare a budget to determine your financial needs.
3. 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.
4. Be realistic: entry-level salaries are less negotiable than salaries for mid-level or executive positions.
5. Practice your salary negotiation skills with a friend, or during a CSC videotaped mock interview session.
6. Document your skills and accomplishments, and be prepared to talk about them. Know why you’re worth whatever you expect to be paid !
7. Don’t be the first to mention salary during the interview, and use the negotiating tips listed below when the topic does come up.
8. Never say, “I need at least \_\_\_ dollars.”
9. Don’t worry about what your friends are making, the employer certainly isn’t.
10. Never lie about your salary history.
11. Relax, it’s natural to feel embarrassed or uncomfortable discussing salary.
12. Once you have accepted a job offer and salary level, be sure to get it in writing.

## How can I find out the market rate salary range?

Uncovering salary information is not as difficult as it may seem. Try the following resources:

1. Visit the Career Services Center website (<http://www.usfca.edu/career/>), click on “Students,” then “Career & Major Exploration” and click on the “Salary Information Section” to view the NaceLink Salary Survey and links to Salary.com
2. Research additional salary related websites:
  - [www.jobsmart.org](http://www.jobsmart.org)
  - [www.wageweb.com](http://www.wageweb.com)
  - [www.salaryexpert.com](http://www.salaryexpert.com)
  - [www.college.wsj.com](http://www.college.wsj.com)
3. Use job listings which indicate salaries for related positions
4. Ask your friends, networking contacts, and other job seekers
5. Contact professional associations in your field of interest
6. Explore salary resources of the chamber of commerce in your region
7. Call employment agencies or executive search firms
8. Review business and trade publications (i.e. *US News & Working Woman* publishes annual salary surveys)



## Are salaries really negotiable?

Yes, and no. The degree to which a salary is negotiable depends on the position, the manager, the organization, your perceived value, and the state of the job market. Most entry-level positions have set salaries that are subject to very little if any negotiation, perhaps a few hundred dollars of negotiating room. Mid-level positions typically have salary ranges of between 10 and 20 percent (i.e., a job paying \$35,000 a year may have a salary range between \$31,500 and \$38,500). Employers will negotiate within the range, but will rarely exceed it unless you are an exceptional candidate. Most state and federal government jobs have rigid, non-negotiable salary scales based on education and experience. In general, higher-level management and executive positions offer the greatest opportunities for negotiation. In any case, never accept an offer in the interview. Express your strong interest, but state that you always think over decisions of this magnitude. Tell your interviewer when you’ll contact him or her with your decision.

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## NEGOTIATING SALARY & BENEFITS CONT'D

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### How can I handle questions about salary during an interview?

1. If asked, "What are your salary requirements?" summarize the requirements of the position as you understand them, and then ask the interviewer for the normal salary range in his/her company for that type of position. On the job application, respond to this question with "negotiable."
2. If asked, "How much did you earn on your last job?" tell the interviewer that you would prefer learning more about the current position before you discuss compensation, and that you are confident you will be able to reach a mutual agreement about salary at that time. Then use examples of your accomplishments that prove your value, don't just refer to your experience in a general way. Comparisons to your current or past salary are irrelevant and should be avoided. Your focus should be on the benefits you'll bring in the future, rather than on your past salary, which may not have reflected your true market value. Also remember that cost of living differentials affect what you can expect to earn in a new location.
3. If told, "The salary range for this position is \$30,000 to \$34,000, is that what you were expecting?" Tell the interviewer that it does come near what you were expecting, and then offer a range which places the top of the employer's range into the bottom of your range (i.e., I was thinking in terms of \$34,000 to \$38,000). Remember: be sure that the range you were thinking about is consistent with what you learned about market rate for that position.
4. If told, "The salary is \$2500 per month," try not to look excited or disappointed. Simply repeat the salary, look up as though you were thinking about it, and pause. Don't worry about the silence; give the employer an opportunity to increase the offer. If the interviewer does not change the offer, try the response suggested in #3 above.

### Introduction to Benefits

In addition to salary, take into consideration the employee benefit plan when evaluating an offer made by a company. In today's job market many employee benefits are considered standard they come with the job and are not subject to negotiation. However, an increasing number of employers are offering flexible benefit packages, which allow employees a variety of choices regarding their benefits. Most entry-level employees can expect a basic benefit package consisting of:

Health insurance  
Life insurance

Dental insurance  
Paid vacation time

Disability insurance  
Paid sick leave

Paid holidays

A more comprehensive benefit package might include some or all of the following:

Bonuses  
Company car  
Desirable office  
Expense accounts  
Parental leave  
Professional membership dues  
Relocation payments  
Savings plans  
Stock Options  
Termination agreement (severance pay)

Child and day-care services  
Cost-of-living adjustments  
Education and training programs  
Flexible work schedule  
Parking  
Profit sharing plans  
Retirement plans  
Special equipment (i.e. laptop computer)  
Supplementary pay plans  
Unpaid leave time

