SALARY NEGOTIATION CHECKLIST

Prior to the Interview Cycle

Research market salary ranges. Research salary ranges based on the role, industry, and geographic region, so you will be in a better negotiating position and know ahead of time if a job will pay what you want. Take advantage of salary surveys published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, or professional associations. Talk with alumni in your field, search salary databases and career forums on the Internet, and visit the employer’s own website.


Asses your worth. You need to be able to provide evidence of why you deserve the salary you require. Consider the typical salary progression of people in your career path, industry, and geographic location, and the demand for job seekers. Make a list of the skills you have mastered, and the results you produce. Be prepared to promote yourself - you are the product.

 Decide on your minimum acceptable salary. If asked and you need to give a range, increase that figure slightly when you give the salary range to a potential employer. This will be the low end of your range.

Prioritize. While base salary is generally the most important part of total compensation, there are additional benefits and other aspects of a job that may be important to you. Consider: bonus, equity, retirement plan employer contribution, paid time off, healthcare, flexible work arrangements. Think ahead about the concessions you are willing to make.

Evaluate your negotiating position. If you have highly sought after skills or are in a high-demand profession, you have more negotiating leverage. If you are one of many candidates, you’ll need to be more careful. What are the employer’s short- and long-term objectives?

Requests for salary history or salary requirements. If asked for salary requirements in a cover letter or job application, write your requirements and note them as either “negotiable” or “to be discussed during interview.” Be honest about your salary history as the employer can research this.

Uncover who are the stakeholders and decision makers? Gain an understanding, in advance, about the decision making process and players.

The Negotiation Process

Respond to any request for salary history or salary requirements. It’s best to avoid mentioning salary or negotiating until the employer raises the question or makes an offer. If the employer asks you right away what salary you are looking for, turn the question around and ask, “Based on my qualifications and skills, what salary range were you thinking of?” If they still want an answer, consider providing a range with your minimum desired salary on the low end of the range.

Take time to think it over. Once you receive an offer, take time to think it over before negotiating. Express appreciation for the offer and ask when they would like to hear back from you.
Research the organization’s benefits package beforehand. You can often find this information on an organization’s website. Don’t hesitate to follow-up with a benefits representative for detailed questions.

Compare multiple offers, if applicable. If you are deciding between more than one offer, objectively evaluate what each will provide you in terms of work/reward. Compare the total value of the two compensation packages to determine which is better. Create a detailed list of the value of the various aspects of the package including salary, medical, dental, disability, tuition reimbursement, retirement plans, vacation time, and other perks.

Begin negotiation conversation. Do so in a courteous, professional manner that emphasizes your view of the negotiations as a way to benefit both you and the employer. If you are overly aggressive, you may damage your image with the employer and may even cause them to rescind their offer. Negotiate on the basis of your qualifications, experience, education, and skills as well as factors like the demand for your skills, and the company’s urgency in filling the position. Also, do not discuss your personal financial concerns with the employer.

Ask for a higher salary (within reasonable limits) than you are willing to accept so that when the organization makes a counter offer, it will be closer to your goal. Highlight transferable skills from previous jobs or other significant experience. If you are changing careers or just entering the job market, you can determine how much to ask for or expect by researching salaries in the field.

Negotiate for your secondary priorities. If a potential employer tells you the specific salary is not negotiable, creatively think of how you can achieve your objective by negotiating for other benefits that are valuable to you.

Be honest. Never misrepresent information about previous salaries in order to get more money from a prospective employer. Similarly, don’t create fake job offers in order to be in a better negotiating position with an employer who has offered you an actual position. Offers are often subject to employment verification.

Accepting the Offer

Be flexible. If the organization’s final offer is slightly lower than you hoped, you may want to consider the offer if it is a good strategic move for you and has strong benefits.

Be reasonable. Be aware of when you’ve achieved a fair deal and stop negotiation so you don’t appear greedy.

Ask for the final offer in writing. Get the offer in writing on company letterhead as soon as is reasonable.