



COLLEGE OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

Salary Negotiation Guide



Many people accept salary offers that are too low simply because they do not know how to negotiate. Sherry Chastain, author of **Winning the Salary Game**, states:

“Almost every salary is negotiable, from a few dollars to many thousands. While you may not be negotiating with employers, they are always negotiating with you – for the lowest sum they can get away with. If you aren’t negotiating, you make their goal that much easier to obtain.”

Many people fear the awkwardness of salary negotiation. Others are concerned that by negotiating they will be viewed as greedy or pushy and may jeopardize their chances for employment. **These fears are only justified if: a) you fail to prepare adequately for salary discussions; b) you fail to discern between the times when salary negotiation is appropriate and times when it isn’t; c) you aren’t tactful.**

What Does Adequate Preparation Involve?

- Know the salary rate for your position. How much are people being paid with a similar background and doing work you plan to do? Resources include:
 - Cornell Career Services Website:
 - Post Graduate Survey
 - Vault Guides
 - Cornell Career Services (103/203 Barnes Hall):
 - Human Ecology Career Exploration Center (162 MVR):
- When judging current salaries based on the previous years figures, remember to add an appropriate percentage (3% to 4%)
- Take into account the cost of living for the area where the job would require you to live.
 - CNN Money’s Cost of Living Calculator:
<http://cgi.money.cnn.com/tools/costofliving/costofliving.html?step=form&x=41&y=8>
- Based on the information that you gather, determine a figure you would settle for and a higher figure which would be an acceptable starting point for negotiations.

When Is It Appropriate to Negotiate?

- Never begin salary negotiations during the interview process, wait until the company places a job offer on the table.
- Keep in mind that salaries for entry level positions may be less negotiable.
- If you have received a more substantial offer from another employer, negotiating may be appropriate if the two positions are comparable.
- If you have tangible evidence that the salary is too low, you may be in a strong position to negotiate.

How Do You Bargain Tactfully?

- Using tact includes expressing what you need to convey yet doing so in a manner that avoids offending someone. It’s important to balance both confidence and politeness.
- Make sure that you do not appear overly concerned about salary. Your interviewer may question your interest in the non-reward aspects of the position.
- Don’t appear apologetic if you ask for higher pay. Realize that if you were to join their organization, both you and the employer would be benefiting from your working there.
- As stated by Somer H. White, president of a consulting firm: “We persuade not by telling but by asking.” Your inquiry may lead your interviewer to rethink certain aspects of this particular employment opportunity, and subsequently, see the justification for raising your pay.

Starting The Conversation (Example Conversations)

“I’m really excited about this fantastic opportunity. However, after having done some research and number crunching, including the cost of living in _____ city as well as what people in similar positions with similar responsibilities are being paid, I was hoping for a salary around \$_____.”

“Thank you for giving me this exciting opportunity to work with your organization. However, in doing my own research for the cost of living in _____ city as well as the salaries of those doing comparable work with similar responsibilities, I feel that a more appropriate salary would be around \$_____.”