

Salary negotiation is an essential and normal part of the job search process. Although it can feel intimidating, it is important to ensure that you are being adequately compensated for your work. Use the information in this guide to help make the negotiation process less stressful and more effective.

PREPARATION

Know Yourself

As you begin your job search it is important to think about your salary requirements. Waiting until you receive an offer does not leave you much time to gather information, and the excitement of a job offer can make it more difficult to be objective. Take time to consider what your needs are:

- **How much will you need to cover your expenses?** Make a sample budget including bills, loan/debt payments, leisure activities, and savings.
 - Determine what your bottom line or **“Walk Away Number”** is BEFORE beginning negotiations. This will help you resist the pressure to accept offers that do not meet your basic needs.
- **What non-monetary factors are important to you?** What benefits, perks, and incentives are you expecting? The top benefits employees prefer are:
 - Health insurance
 - Paid time off
 - Disability or life insurance
 - Retirement savings plan
 - Leave of absence
 - Tuition assistance or reimbursement
- **What is your long-term career path?** Think about how the job will help you stay on track with your future goals. Regardless of the money, is this the appropriate next step for you?

Know the Market

Research salary information for your industry and job type so that you can better assess offers. Understand what the average pay is for someone with your background and skill set so that you can enter into negotiations with appropriate expectations.

- Use the list of resources on page 2 to find industry specific and personalized salary information.
- Talk to alumni and people in your industry to learn the average salary range. **DO NOT** ask people to disclose their exact salary. Ask *“What is the typical salary for this type of job?”* or *“What does this company typically offer for this role?”*
- Schedule a meeting with a career coach to discuss your offer or practice your negotiation skills. Sign up for appointments in Handshake ([gww.joinhandshake.com](https://careers.seas.gwu.edu)).

THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

1. **Get the written offer.** Wait until you receive a written offer before beginning negotiations. Ask how long you will have to make a decision. It is ok to ask for more time to consider an offer.
2. **Evaluate the offer.** How does the offer compare to the research you did? Consider all the components of the offer and ask for additional information if you need it (e.g. more detailed health insurance information). You can negotiate any part of the offer so if you are pleased with the salary consider the other benefits.
3. **Schedule a meeting to discuss the offer.** The meeting should be “live” in person or over the phone. Write down any questions you have or areas that you would like clarified. Determine what you will ask for and remember your Walk Away Number.
4. **Accept or decline.** If you reach an agreement with the employer that is satisfactory to you both, accept the offer. If you are unable to come to an agreement, politely decline and thank them for taking the time to negotiate.

SALARY RESOURCES

GW Alumni Career Outcomes | survey.gwu.edu/public-vizzes

Employment and salary information for alumni, organized by school and major.

Payscale.com | <https://www.payscale.com>

Get a customized salary report based on your background and skill set.

Salary.com | <https://www.salary.com>

Compare salary estimates or receive a customized report.

Glassdoor | <https://www.glassdoor.com>

Self-reported salary information for thousands of companies and jobs.

Robert Half Salary Guides | <https://www.roberthalf.com/salary-guide>

Get salary information for various industries, a salary calculator, and city-by-city comparisons.

OPM Wage Schedules | <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>

Pay scale information for federal government civilian jobs.

TIPS

- **Manage emotional responses.** Strong emotions prevent memory and recall. Stay calm and remember that negotiation is a normal part of the career process.
- **Don't be afraid of silence.** Give the other person time to think and respond to your request.
- **Try to avoid bringing up a number first.** If you have to provide a number first, leave room for negotiation by offering a range (\$5k-\$10k) or by saying that you are “open to negotiation”.
- **“Think I, talk we”.** Frame your request in a way that acknowledges the employer’s perspective and benefits your relationship with them.
- **Get it in writing.** Request a written copy of the initial offer as well as the final negotiated offer.