



BITE-SIZED CAREER STRATEGIES

Salary Negotiation

There are generally two opportunities to influence how much money you make: when you get a new job and when you ask for a raise in an existing job. Most private sector employers are willing — and expect — to negotiate salaries on initial job offers for entry-level workers. The government, too, negotiates salary and some benefits with first-time federal employees.



Negotiating a Salary at a New Private Sector Job

What's the worst that can happen if you choose to negotiate? You may not get all that you're asking for. You may only get some — but that's more than you started with.

- 1. Do Your Homework.** When you're buying any major item (house, car, big screen television), it's important to do your homework and find out the value of the item. It's also important to do your homework when negotiating a salary or a raise. Research your market value — what you're worth — for your position, level of experience, and industry — and not what you “need” to make.
- 2. Timing the Salary Discussion in an Interview.** Timing is critical in salary negotiations. In negotiating an initial salary for a job, you (the jobseeker) do not want to be the one to bring it up in an interview. Let the hiring manager be the first to discuss salary.
- 3. Know What You Want.** You don't have to accept the first salary offer you're given. You may want to respond with “hmmm” instead of “okay” when presented with a salary offer. You can also ask if the company's offer is flexible. The “worst case scenario” might be that the interviewer tells you your salary is set by company policy and there is no room to negotiate.
- 4. You should consider the full value** of the compensation package — not just the salary. Benefits can make a huge difference in your compensation package, so don't overlook them!



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Making the Case for a Raise

You're not entitled *to a raise* — but, at the same time, you deserve to be fairly compensated for your work. If you deserve a raise, ask for one.

If you work for a company that doesn't do annual performance reviews (and raises), ask your supervisor for an opportunity to meet one-on-one to discuss your workload, performance, objectives, and compensation. For each of these topics, take the initiative to prepare the questions and information to guide the discussion. Scheduling regular reviews with your supervisor will help ensure you're on track with your performance — and give you the opportunity to discuss your performance — and compensation — each year.

Preparing Supporting Documentation

When asking for a raise, provide written materials to back up your salary request. This can include salary data from websites, previous performance evaluations, and job postings for similar positions.

Prepare a 1- to 5-page document outlining what you've accomplished and your salary research.

Negotiating in the Federal Government

Contrary to what you may have heard, the federal government can negotiate salary for new federal employees. Like the private sector, the time to negotiate is before you accept a position. When an offer is made, you may negotiate the steps within a particular grade or salary range. You'll likely need to demonstrate your value (see above on preparing supporting documentation) and you may be asked to furnish proof of your current salary.

Vacation time is also negotiable in the federal government, again, upon initial entry. Depending on the years of experience you have, you may be eligible for enhanced vacation time accrual. Again, you need to ask for this before you accept the position.

Other benefits such as health insurance are not negotiable in federal employment.



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