



# HOW TO NEGOTIATE YOUR SALARY AND ASK FOR A PROMOTION

# The pay you deserve.

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### How to ask your boss for a raise: 5 steps for getting the pay you deserve

You probably have good reason to ask your boss for a raise. The longer you're in your position, the more your responsibilities expand and grow. Additionally, with more experience, the quality of your work improves. However, as your contributions to the organization grow, your pay doesn't always grow at the same rate.

While many companies provide cost-of-living increases, it's not always a guarantee. In addition, these increases only keep up with rising costs; they don't necessarily increase your buying power. This leaves you with two options.

You could look for a position elsewhere. This can be a valid choice to make if you don't particularly care for your current position, don't see the opportunity for advancement you want, or are interested in a new venture. However, if you've landed on an article about how to ask your boss for a raise, it's more likely that you don't mind your job so much and prefer to stay.

Your second choice is to ask for a pay raise. This can seem intimidating at first. After all, discussions about pay are not often encouraged in the workplace. Beyond that, asking for a pay increase can feel vulnerable. Still, beyond the perceived discomforts, there's little true harm in doing so. Most organizations aren't likely to offer you more pay for taking on more work, but they may be willing to consider it. However, if you want the best chance of success, you'll need to build out a well-supported case to present your argument

#### **Step 1: Do your research.**

If you simply ask your boss for a raise out of the blue, it's not likely to go very far. After all, they'll most likely ask why, and you need a good answer. Before you approach the conversation, you need to do research and preparation so you can explain exactly why you deserve a pay increase.

## **Audit your current work**

First, you need a good understanding of the work you're already doing. Write down and organize the tasks you do. Don't skimp — capture just about everything, even if it seems like a mundane task. After all, neither you nor your boss may realize just how much work you actually do on a daily basis. This list will be vital for the next step.

Beyond just writing down the tasks themselves, think of, and note, the skills associated with them. If you have multiple tasks you have to balance at once, reflect on the project management skills needed to do so. If you always needed your boss's input when you started, but now can handle many requests on your own, that shows an increase in your skills and ownership over your work.

Put thought into this step, and don't sell yourself short.

## **Do comparative research**

Now that you know the work you're doing, you need to prove that it merits more pay than you're currently receiving.

## **Look at other job postings online**

Look at postings for similar positions as well as more senior versions of your current position. Compare the tasks to your self-audit list and see how the responsibilities line up. If your work requires more skills or you have more responsibility than comparable jobs, then that's a solid point in your favor.

Ideally, some of these job postings should include pay ranges, which will be helpful information to make your case. If your workload looks similar to higher-paying jobs posted, then you'll want to have this information. If you can't find pay information, look at sites like Glassdoor, Indeed, and LinkedIn to find average pay for similar positions in your area.

However, do keep in mind that pay can vary greatly. For example, a public-sector position may pay less but come with better benefits. You likely can't ask for a \$20,000 pay increase, but you can still use it as a talking point to negotiate a more realistic pay increase.

## **Research company pay and policies**

If available, consider asking HR for your pay band and job description. This may not be available, depending on the size of the company. However, you could try to look at the original listing for your position if you still have it. If you applied through a job-posting website, it may be saved to your account.

Look at the job description and compare your current workload. If you're covering all the responsibilities, and perhaps going above and beyond, then you can make the case for the

higher end of the pay range. This is especially true if you have pay-range data, but you can use your external research as a gauge for fair pay here as well.

Finally, some organizations may have caps on pay increases. For example, many governmental organizations cap pay raises at 10%.

## **Step 2: Outline your case.**

Now that you've done your research, you need to outline your case. What supporting documentation you want is up to you. However, you should have a detailed outline for your own use when asking your boss for a raise. Additionally, you want some sort of document to leave with your boss. This will give them something to reference back.

Beyond that, there's a good chance they can't authorize a pay increase on their own. If they need to make the case to HR or upper management, they're likely to represent you better if you've laid the details out for them than if they must rely on memory alone. This could be a short one-pager with highlights, or you could provide a full two- to three-page proposal. I would avoid anything longer than that, as it becomes unwieldy and they may be less likely to read it.

### **Introduction**

Include an overview of your request in the introduction, and state that you'd like to discuss your role, responsibilities, and pay. You want to be to the point about the purpose of the conversation. Confidence is always key.

### **Your points of comparison**

Highlight some of your research, whether it be internal or external. Note where your current work exceeds that of comparable positions and how it better matches higher-paying jobs. Focus on how your work requires more skill and/or how you've taken on more ownership and responsibility.

### **Outline highlights of your performance**

Support some of the most compelling pieces with examples. If you've gone from supporting projects to leading projects, talk about one. If you're the go-to person on certain issues, whereas the job description says you're expected to "support your supervisor" on issues, point that out. Stick to a few solid examples that will be memorable, not a whole laundry list where your greatest highlights will get lost.

### **Include the request**

I recommend saving the actual ask for the end. Bringing up numbers in the beginning may frame your boss's view of the conversation from the start. Instead, you want to make an irrefutable case before you bring numbers into it. However, you need to know exactly what your ask is before you have the conversation. Otherwise, your boss might consider \$1,000 a

reasonable increase, when you were hoping for \$5,000 — leaving you unsatisfied even if you technically get what you asked for.

At this point, you should have a better idea of what a reasonable request is. It's unlikely that asking for a \$20,000 pay increase will yield results. However you should ask for a little more than you hope for, leaving room for negotiation. For example, if you currently are paid \$50,000 a year and hope to make \$55,000, you likely shouldn't ask for \$65,000. Consider asking for \$56-58,000 instead. This leaves room to negotiate down to a number you're comfortable with.

It's important to be ambitious and defend the number you ask for, but also to be reasonable. Too high of an ask, and your request might be shut down from the start.

### **Step 3: Preparing for the conversation.**

How to approach a conversation about salary negotiation will vary based on your organization, relationship with your supervisor, and other factors. However, there are some general best practices to keep in mind.

#### **Try to communicate face-to-face**

Email isn't ideal for any complex conversation; it's hard to read tone and convey details. Choose the most personal communication option available to you, whether that be a meeting, video chat, or phone call.

#### **Don't ambush your boss**

Asking your boss for a raise will likely be a lengthy conversation. So it's probably not best to stop by and ask for a moment to chat out of the blue. Instead, consider bringing it up during a regularly scheduled one-on-one check-in or setting a separate meeting. If you're doing it during a normal meeting, make sure you have enough time left on the agenda. Consider extending the meeting slightly if needed. If you set a separate meeting, don't be too vague about it. Tell your boss that you'd like to discuss your position and responsibilities; you don't have to tell them you want to ask for a pay raise.

#### **Practice what you want to say**

You want to be concise and confident, not rambling. Use an outline that highlights the key points and practice what you're going to say a few times. Ideally, do this out loud. You'll be able to work through your key points and identify anything that sounded good in your head, but didn't quite come out right.

#### **Prepare your supporting documents**

Print out your outline and reference documents. You may want to bring the job descriptions and pay scales you pulled, your work audit, and any other reference documents. You don't

necessarily need to provide your boss with a copy of each item, but you should keep them for reference in case they're needed in the conversation.

Do print out whatever documents you want to provide your boss with, whether it's just a page of the conversation highlights or a slightly longer proposal with more detail. Having something to share shows you're prepared and have done your homework.

## **Step 4: Ask your boss for a raise**

### **Consider your tone**

You don't want to sound threatening or demanding. Implying that you're likely to look elsewhere if you don't get a raise isn't a good way to start the conversation. However, you do want to be confident and firm. You're not asking if you deserve more pay; you've decided that you do. Instead, you're asking if the company is willing to give you more pay for your work.

Avoid vague or hesitant language. In difficult conversations, some people tend to shrink back, using vague phrases or not wishing to talk up their credentials as much. While it may be counter to your instinct or upbringing, remember that standing up for yourself and being confident isn't the same as boasting. Here's one example of how to change your language to sound confident.

If you're hesitant, you may say something like "I've been thinking about it, and while I know it may not be possible, I feel like I deserve more money for the work I do." However, you don't just feel like you deserve more pay — you've decided you do.

Instead, consider something like this: "Upon evaluating my workload, and that of comparable positions, it's clear that the work I'm currently doing is more in line with higher-paying positions. Because of that, I'd like to discuss my current workload and salary, and what options are available."

### **Ask for the next steps**

Don't just end the conversation with vague next steps. Thank your boss for the discussion, then ask what the next steps are and if they need anything else from you while they consider your case. Ask what their next steps are and what a timeline might look like.

If you leave the conversation with a vague "I'll consider it and get back to you," it leaves too much room for delay and creates an awkward position where you may need to keep checking in. Having a clear-cut next step helps you gauge when you can expect to know more.

## **Step 5: What to do after you ask your boss for a raise**

It may take some time before you have a definitive answer. In many organizations, several levels of approval are needed. Still, while you don't want to push the topic to the point of frustrating your supervisor, keep it on their mind. Consider keeping it as an item on your weekly

check-in. If a set date comes and goes without hearing back, it's okay to check in and ask if they've made any progress.

### **Prepare to hear “no”**

This is, of course, a possibility. Perhaps it's not in the budget, not a good time, or they don't agree with your evaluation. Either way, you need to be prepared for this and determine what you wish to do after. For some, this may be a cue that it's time to move on, but if you're otherwise happy with your job, use it as an opportunity to ask questions.

For example, if it's not in the budget, ask if it could be considered in next year's budget. If your boss doesn't feel that a pay increase is warranted for your work, ask what you'd need to do in your job to justify a future pay increase. Either way, ask for an explanation, and don't be shy about opportunities for a pay raise in the future.

## **Asking for a promotion**

While going through this process, you may find that the work you're doing doesn't just merit higher pay, but actually reflects a different job title. If that's the case, you may wish to choose to request a promotion instead. The process looks largely the same, except your end goal is not just an increase in pay. With that in mind, there are a couple of other considerations.

### **It's likely a bigger ask**

In some companies, this may not be such a big deal. For example, if your position already has tiers like Junior and Senior, or numerical rankings, then promotions are likely more common. However, if that's not the case then seeking a promotion may take much more internal approval and perhaps even some slight reorganization. If that's the case, you'll want to be certain that the case you present is solid and detailed.

### **It's more likely you'll hear no**

However, this isn't necessarily the end of the line. If your supervisor says a promotion is not possible right now, it's a perfect opportunity to discuss what you need to do to qualify for a promotion in the future. Ask to create an action plan.

## **5 steps for successfully negotiating pay after a job offer**

Many people have been there. You received a job offer, but it's not quite the pay you were hoping for. You could turn it down, but if it's a job you're excited about, or perhaps need, then that's not a viable option. Still, you shouldn't throw in the towel. Instead, you should negotiate the job offer.

Your starting pay at a company can heavily impact your future earnings. Some companies, for example, put caps on how much of a pay increase you can get through a promotion, such as 10% or base pay for the new position. Even if that's not the case, it can be harder to convince management to significantly increase your pay when you get promoted down the line. That means a higher starting pay could also result in higher earnings down the road. Still, even if you're not thinking about long-term earnings, you deserve to be paid fairly for the work you do.

So that leaves you just one option: negotiating your job offer. Many people may be uncomfortable with this, but know that negotiating an offer doesn't mean you're declining an offer. You may still choose to take the lower pay if negotiations fall through. However, in order to maximize your chances of success (and earnings), you'll want to ensure you have a strategy for doing so. So let's walk step by step through how to negotiate your pay after a job offer.

### **Step 1: Take a moment**

You don't have to accept a job offer immediately, and most companies don't expect you to. Typically you'll receive an offer by phone. Next, more official documentation will be sent over by email or perhaps even physical mail. Either way, ask for at least 24–48 hours to consider the offer. This gives you time to read over the full offer, but also to consider your response.

### **Step 2: Do your research before trying to negotiate a job offer**

Before you begin negotiating a pay increase, you'll need to do some research. This ensures you're approaching the conversation from an informed place. Here, you want to show that a higher pay range is merited for the work you'll be doing. There are a couple of ways to approach this.

#### **Look at the pay range**

If the position has a pay range listed in the job posting, then this will be an easy task. Pull the job description and see how the offer you were made compares with the pay range. Is it near the bottom, middle, or top? If it's near the top, there won't be much room for negotiation, but you may be able to make the case that you deserve the highest pay possible.

Once you've done this, go through the job description and note how much experience you have for each requirement. Additionally, if the job lists years of experience desired, note how much experience you have in comparison. From here, you can come up with a rough percentage for how many of the qualifications you check off. If you meet a majority of the qualifications and the years of experience but were only offered low to mid-range pay for the position, you can make a stronger case for increased pay. If you only fall in the middle and were offered mid-range pay, then you can still make a case for more, but it will be a bit more difficult.



## **Benchmark your pay range with other positions**

Unfortunately, not all companies list pay ranges for positions. In this case, you'll have to get your data elsewhere. A good place to start is on sites like LinkedIn and Glassdoor, where you can find average pay for positions in your area. See how the pay you're offered compares to the average. Additionally, you can look at other job postings online for similar positions and the pay offered. Compare your job responsibilities with those of these other positions listed; if they largely match up, then it's a good point of comparison.

These should only serve as benchmarks. It's also important to remember that pay may vary greatly in different industries. For example, a public-sector job may pay a bit lower than private companies but could have better vacation time and benefits. Still, note how your offer compares to a few comparable positions.

## **Step 3: Outline your case**

This is where you'll create the case you plan to use to negotiate the job offer. This next step doesn't need to be exceptionally detailed, but you should have some solid points. You'll want to use your research from Step 2 to make an overall high-level case.

First, come up with an overarching statement to simplify your key point. Here are two examples:

- I meet most of the job qualifications and fall on the upper end of the experience required, but was only offered the mid-range for pay. I deserve a higher salary.
- Compared to similar positions in my area, the pay I was offered is a bit low. Because I have significant job experience and meet the position's qualifications, I deserve pay more in line with the average.

Next, pull some supporting details. Look through the job description and find two to three of the most compelling pieces of information. For example, if the position requires four to six years of experience and you have six, that's compelling. If the position requires you to manage certain types of projects and you have extensive experience doing so, that's also compelling. You want to be able to provide a couple of quick examples to solidify your case for why you deserve more pay, without getting bogged down going over a laundry list of points from your résumé.

## **Choosing a number**

Finally, come up with your number. It's important to be somewhat realistic here. For example, if you're offered \$45,000 a year and ask for \$60,000, it's likely to be a non-starter. In this case, you may hurt your chances of any pay increase by going too far. As a rule of thumb, it's probably best to keep a request for a pay increase to 10% or less. So in this case, you could consider asking for \$48–49,000, assuming your research supports it.

Consider leaving a little wiggle room for negotiation. Determine what the true number you'll be happy with is. If \$47,000 is what you really want, then ask for a little bit more to leave room in case they counter-offer. Still, keep it within a reasonable range, if your target goal for the above

example really is \$49,000, then asking for more is probably not a good idea, as requesting \$50–51,000 may be pushing too high for an offer of \$45,000.

#### **Step 4: Make the call to negotiate your job offer**

It's worth noting initially that you should practice a little bit before you call. It may even be advisable to have a short outline in front of you with your key points. You won't necessarily need to have a full set of handouts; after all, you'll probably be talking via phone in this case. Still, it's good to have whatever materials you need to keep on track and make sure each point is captured in the conversation.

Generally speaking, a phone call is the best option. It's a more personal form of communication and it demands immediate attention. However, if your primary form of communication has been email thus far, it may be appropriate to email instead. Regardless of how you end up communicating, keep the following in mind:

Be concise and to the point. Explain that you wish to discuss your offer and see what room there is for movement on the pay.

Additionally, make it clear that this is a negotiation, not an ultimatum. Express that you're very interested in the position, but were hoping for a slightly different number. You don't want to give the impression that a pay increase is a deal-breaker, unless, of course, it is. Still, even if that's the case, implying such may sound more like a threat and could harm your chances of success.

Next, go through your key points you outlined. Make your case in just a minute or two. Highlight the top reasons you chose for why your experience merits higher pay. If you're using research from other companies, use average figures to show the gap between other positions and what you were offered.

Keep in mind, you shouldn't expect a response either way immediately. It's likely the HR rep you speak to, or the hiring manager, won't be able to approve this immediately. There will be necessary internal conversations first. If you have the conversation via phone, offer to send a follow-up email highlighting your request and the main points you expressed. This ensures that you're not just relying on the quality of their note-taking to make your case.

Finally, ask when you can expect to hear back and what the next steps are. This will give you an idea of when you should expect an answer. Thank them for their time and consideration, then reiterate your interest in the position and the company.

#### **Step 5: Wait**

Now it's time to wait for a response. Keep in mind it could take a couple of days. If you haven't heard back by the time you were told to expect a response, then it's fine to send a quick follow-up email checking in. In the meantime, you should think about a couple of options.

### **What if the offer is less than you want?**

If they do increase your offer, but it's still not as high as you're comfortable with, you'll have to decide what you wish to do. Determine the absolute minimum number that you're willing to accept. It's unlikely that you'll be able to counter-offer again, so you need to prepare to either accept or turn down the position.

### **What if they say no?**

You also should be prepared to hear no. Despite the effort you put in to negotiate the job offer, that doesn't guarantee success. This could be for a number of reasons. For example, only a certain amount may be budgeted for the position. In other companies, despite showing pay ranges, there may be policies that prevent offers at the highest point of the range.

Next, you must decide if you're willing to still take the original offer or not. Make this decision before you hear back. Regardless of the reason, it's important to thank them for the consideration when you talk to them.

One final option for consideration is to ask about a conditional pay raise. For example, if they're not willing to increase your pay now, ask if you could qualify for a boost in pay after a six-month evaluation. This gives the company time to see how you perform on the job, and they may be more amenable to it. However, bear in mind that such an arrangement is not a guarantee of a pay increase.

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