

HOW TO DISCUSS SALARY WITH YOUR NEW EMPLOYER

Under the best of circumstances, it can be nerve-racking to tackle the topic of compensation with a new or prospective employer. You worry that if you don't negotiate, you'll end up with the lowest possible salary (true); but if you play hardball, you may not get the job at all (usually untrue, but who knows?).



In this economy, employers are particularly keen to get you to accept the lowest end of whatever range of salary they are prepared to offer. And some employers won't negotiate at all. So what to do? **Don't bring up salary until you get a firm job offer.** That isn't to say that the employer won't bring it up sooner. But don't mention it yourself until offered a position. Sometimes, an employer hasn't even seriously considered salary -- they wanted to see who they would hire first. Others are waiting for you to broach the topic, and you will have given the impression that you want the job for the job, and not just for the money. Of course, this is all unfair -- you're putting in all the time and work of the interview process, and have no clear idea of how much the job pays. I once interviewed for a great job with a great company -- and was told at the very end of the process that they really wanted me, but didn't think I would like the pay. It was half of what I could conceivably live on, and I was forced to turn it down. If I'd known what the job paid from the beginning, I would have politely turned down the interview. **Find out what other people are paid for the same position at similar firms.** This research is very easy to do online. In my experience, what websites list as the average salary for various positions is much higher than what employers actually offer. But if you can say "whatpeoplegetpaid.com says the average wage for a widget comptroller is \$80,000," the employer is put in the position of having to offer you something near the higher end of what the firm is willing to pay. **Don't lie about past salaries.** Often, employers ask what you made at your last job, and tack on 5% or 10%. If that total is within their acceptable salary range, that's what they offer. This might tempt you to lie about your past salary. *Don't.* Lying about something that can easily be fact-checked is a great way to end up back in the dole queue. **Don't use your personal life in salary negotiations.** Your prospective employer does not want to hear that your kid needs braces, or that your mortgage is past due. You haven't even started yet, and you're already dragging your home life into the office. When negotiating salary, talk about the professional credentials and skills that will make you valuable to the firm. Make clear that by hiring you at better pay, they will in fact save money, and may just be snatching you away from other prospective employers. Don't bring your personal life into it. Got any more advice for negotiating salaries? Let us know in the [comments](#)!