



## Entry-Level Salary (Probably) Isn't as Negotiable as You Think

By Peter Vogt, Monster Senior Contributing Writer

Even in the best of economic times, salary negotiation is a risky proposition for most new college graduates pursuing entry-level positions.

Sure, you might have some bargaining leverage these days if you've majored in a hot field like [accounting](#) or [engineering](#), or if you've developed some rare skill that is very much in demand among prospective employers. But in more cases than you probably care to acknowledge, starting salaries are basically set, and you just don't have enough to offer at this stage in your career to make employers budge.

"You can negotiate if you have something extra special to negotiate with," says Terese Corey Blanck, director of recruitment and placement for Corporate Interns, an internship and entry-level placement firm.

But a college degree and a couple of internships aren't enough, Corey Blanck emphasizes. "If you're bringing some special experience or expertise to the table, then give [negotiation] a try," she says. "But nine times out of 10, the company has to invest more money just to get you up to speed, so negotiating an entry-level salary really shouldn't be your first priority."

### Use Your Head

That doesn't mean you can't attempt to negotiate an offer you've received, especially if you really do think you have something above and beyond to offer a prospective employer. But be careful -- very careful.

"You've got to have a rationale for why you believe you should be paid more," says Sheila Curran, Fannie Mitchell Executive Director of the career center at Duke University and coauthor of *Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads*. Moreover, you need to use your head when it comes to how you approach the negotiation itself, says Brad Karsh, president of [JobBound](#) and author of *Confessions of a Recruiting Director*.

"Try once, and only once," Karsh says. "If they say, 'We don't negotiate,' then end it right there. You run the risk of damaging your reputation -- and risking your offer -- if you go too far."

### Do Your Homework

If, on the other hand, the employer you're dealing with appears to be open to some negotiation when it comes to your salary and/or other benefits (e.g., bonuses, [relocation allowance](#), tuition reimbursement), feel free to take a shot at it. Know in advance, though, that you'll need to have completed some pretty extensive research ahead of time to make a compelling case for yourself.

"The key to any negotiation is to do your homework," Karsh says. That means tapping your school's [career center](#), professional associations in your field and Internet salary sites to get an accurate sense of starting salaries in your industry, in your geographic area and at your level of education and experience.

"Know the market and whether you have the skills or experience that might warrant being paid differently than your peers," Curran says.

It's also important to pursue your negotiation activities respectfully, employing thoughtful, strategic questions and not overbearing "show me the money" types of demands.

"You can't go in with an attitude of 'I'm entitled,'" says Corey Blanck, "But, rather, 'I have this specific experience and expertise -- is this something that's worthwhile to you and, if so, are you open to negotiating a higher starting salary?'"

You may not get what you want. But at least you won't lose what you already have.

<http://career-advice.monster.com/salary-benefits/negotiation-tips/entry-level-salary-negotiable/article.aspx>