

10 Questions to Ask When Negotiating Salary

By Dona DeZube, Monster Finance Careers Expert



What you ask for during a salary negotiation doesn't just influence how much you earn -- it also tells your future employer whether you're good at negotiating, which is a skill you can put to work for the employer once you're hired.

Negotiating salary doesn't come naturally to many Americans, says Matthew DeLuca, author of *Perfect Phrases for Negotiating Salary and Job Offers: Hundreds of Ready-to-Use Phrases to Help You Get the Best Possible Salary, Perks, or Promotion*. "Most people in our country are not used to bargaining," he says, "But if you don't bargain, you're not going to get all you should."

Perfect Phrases explains how to negotiate salary, but DeLuca's tips also apply to [contract and project-based pay negotiations](#). In both cases, the people on the other side of the salary negotiations are trying to get you for the most cost-effective price.

To win your best salary, continue talking until you get everything you want, whether that's a higher base, an early salary review or company-paid childcare, DeLuca says.

"There's always a risk involved with any questions you raise when the offer is made, but it's better to ask questions then, because if [the company is] uncompromising, that's not a healthy situation," he says. "If they have no tolerance for questions, you need to know that up front."

Think of a salary negotiation as your chance to shine. "The person on the other side of the desk is evaluating you," DeLuca says. "This is going to show you're astute in dealing with the outside world. When you get the offer, don't let your guard down -- you're still on the firing line. Feel confident, because they've come to you with an offer."

To make sure you get all you deserve, DeLuca recommends asking these 10 questions:

1. "Thanks -- is this a firm job offer?"

Demonstrate that you're professional, polished and polite by saying thank you, and immediately follow to make sure that you really have just been offered a job.

2. "Is this negotiable?"

Once the salary offer is revealed, it never hurts to ask if they'll put more money on the table. If they say no, you can move on to negotiate other items.

3. "Is this base only?"

Asking if the figure you're offered is total compensation or base compensation lets the interviewer know you're interested in the details of bonuses and stock options, and it opens up other questions about bonus opportunities.

4. “When would you like an answer?”

Never accept a job offer on the spot. In our society, you’re perceived as more effective if you’re thoughtful. Plus, stalling gives you time to consider your negotiation strategy. You can say, “This is a great job, and I really want it, but in my experience, I’m better off thinking about it and coming back to you.” Never say you need to discuss it with your spouse -- you want to appear confident and capable of making a decision on your own.

5. “Will I get the offer in writing?”

Don’t accept an offer that isn’t in writing. Not everyone is honest. If you quit a job based on the verbal promise of a new job that then falls through, you’ll have no job and no recourse.

6. “Will there be a sign-on bonus?”

If they say no, your response is, “OK, I’m just asking.” Just because the pay isn’t negotiable doesn’t mean other aspects of the job aren’t. Ask for flextime, telecommuting or anything else that’s important to you.

7. “What is the start date?”

This is a way to reaffirm that the offer is serious. Most people want you to start immediately but will be disappointed if you agree to do so. If you leave your current employer in the lurch, the concern is that you might do the same to this company someday. If you’re switching jobs rather than coming off unemployment, build in time to close out your existing job and take a vacation.

8. “May I please have a job description?”

This question verifies the job you’re being hired to do is the job described during the interview process - and is a job you’re capable of doing.

9. “How and when will I be evaluated, and will there be an increase on the basis of that evaluation?”

These questions separate out when you’ll be evaluated and when you’ll be eligible for a raise. Those two events are often, but not always, linked.

10. “Regarding benefits, please provide the details -- when do they start?”

If your current employer’s health coverage will end before you’re covered by the new employer’s plan, you can negotiate for the new employer to pay the cost of extending your old policy under [COBRA](#).

As you ask these 10 questions, keep in mind that in addition to gathering necessary information, you’re showing your new boss that you’re a good negotiator. “You want them to know they’re smart to offer you the job, but you’re not going to come cheap,” DeLuca says.