



## Overcome Your Fears About Negotiating Salary

By [ALISON GREEN](#)

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Most job seekers are thrilled to get a job offer but dread the salary negotiation that comes along with it. Negotiating salary can especially be intimidating for people who don't do much negotiating in their daily lives, and many would rather simply accept an employer's first offer than push for more.



Alison Green

But [overcoming your fears](#) about negotiation can lead you to increase your starting salary significantly. Here are some of the most common fears about negotiating, and how you can overcome them.

1. **"The employer's goal is to lowball me."** Well, that might be their goal, but if they're a good employer, their goal is probably to get you for a fair-market salary that's in line with their salary structure and which you'll be happy with. Smart employers want to ensure that their employees feel fairly compensated, because they want to retain them. If they manage to hire you for below the market rate for your work, you're more [likely to leave](#) as soon as you find something that pays more. If you're dealing with a decent employer, assume that you both want a fair and reasonable salary agreement. (Of course, that's a big caveat. If you're dealing with a shady employer, this doesn't apply.)
2. **"If I try to negotiate, they might pull the offer entirely."** This is probably the biggest fear of job seekers when it comes to negotiating. Fortunately, it's pretty baseless, as long as you handle the negotiation in a pleasant and professional manner—without being too pushy or adversarial about it—and as long as you don't ask for an amount so unrealistic that it calls into question your sanity. That's not to say that no one has ever lost a job offer by [trying to negotiate](#)—some people have. But that only happens with highly dysfunctional employers, and you're generally better off not working for them. If they react so bizarrely to such a normal move on your part, imagine how they handle requests for time off, raises, or new projects.
3. **"If I ask for more and don't get it, I'll look silly accepting their lower offer."** You might worry that if you ask for a higher salary and get turned down, you'll lose face by accepting the initial offer. But employers won't see it that way at all. If they tell you that their offer is firm and you ultimately decide to accept it, they won't think any less of you for having asked if there was any flexibility.
4. **"I don't know what salary to ask for, so I might end up lowballing myself."** If this is your fear, do some information-gathering so that you're not coming into negotiations blind. Before you reach the offer stage with any job, you want to have [researched the market rate](#) for this type of work in your geographic area. That way, you're not just guessing what an appropriate salary would be; you'll have some data to base your thinking on.
5. **"I'll look foolish if I don't negotiate, but I'm happy with the initial offer."** While in most cases it makes sense to try to negotiate an initial offer for at least a little bit more—because you'll often get it—sometimes you're thrilled with the first offer and think it's fair, or even more than fair. If you're dealing with a generous company that has matched your expectations, don't beat yourself up if you decide to simply relax and accept.

*Alison Green writes the popular [Ask a Manager](#) blog, where she dispenses advice on career, job search, and management issues. She's also the co-author of [Managing to Change the World: The Nonprofit Manager's Guide to Getting Results](#), and former chief of staff of a successful nonprofit organization, where she oversaw day-to-day staff management, hiring, firing, and employee development.*

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