

ER | ELENA RAILEANU
CAREER COACHING

your salary negotiation scripts

ASK FOR MORE

What to say when they ask your expectations, when the offer arrives, and when they say the budget is fixed.

The moment you get an offer is the moment you have the most leverage you'll ever have with that employer. Yet many people accept the first number because they're afraid of seeming greedy or losing the offer.

From the HR side, I can tell you: most employers expect you to negotiate, and a respectful negotiation almost never costs anyone an offer. What it does do is set your pay, your raises, and your future offers for years. This guide gives you the scripts.

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1. Why negotiating matters more than you think

Your starting salary becomes the base for every raise and bonus percentage that follows, and often for your next employer's offer too. A few thousand dollars today can add up to tens of thousands over a career. Negotiating isn't greedy. It's a normal part of business, and hiring managers usually build some room into their first offer.

2. Know your number before they ask

Research the market range for the role, level, and location:

- **The job posting.** Many states and cities now require employers to include a pay range.
- **Salary sites** like Glassdoor, Levels.fyi for tech roles, Payscale, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- **Recruiters** in your field, who know what offers are really closing at.
- **People in similar roles.** Ask, "What range would you expect for this role?" rather than "What do you make?"

Then set three numbers: your **walk-away** (the lowest you'd accept), your **target**, and your **ask**, which should sit at or slightly above your target, still within reason.

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3. Handling "What are your salary expectations?"

Early in the process, try to learn their range first:

> *"I'm focused on finding the right fit, and I'm sure we can find a number that works. What range have you budgeted for this role?"*

If they insist, give a researched range with your target near the bottom: "Based on my research and experience, I'm looking in the range of $95,000 to $110,000, depending on the full package."

> KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
>
> Some states, including Massachusetts, prohibit employers from asking about your salary history. You can say: "I prefer to focus on the value I'll bring to this role and the market range for it."

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4. When the offer arrives

1. **Thank them warmly** and express real excitement.
2. **Don't accept on the spot.** "Thank you, I'm really excited. Could I have a day or two to review the full offer?"
3. **Ask for everything in writing:** base, bonus, equity, benefits, start date, title, and time off.
4. **Negotiate by phone or video when you can.** Tone comes through better than in email.

5. Scripts for the negotiation

The main ask

> *"I'm excited about this role and the team. Based on the scope of the position and market data for similar roles, I was expecting something closer to $105,000. Is there flexibility on the base salary?"*

Then stop talking. The silence feels long, but let them answer first.

If they say the budget is fixed

> *"I understand. If the base can't move, could we look at a signing bonus, an extra week of vacation, or a salary review at six months?"*

If you have another offer

> *"You're my first choice. I do have another offer at $108,000. Is there anything you can do to close the gap?"*

Only say this if it's true. Employers sometimes ask to see the offer.

When you're ready to accept

> *"Thank you for working with me on this. I'm happy to accept, and I'm excited to get started."*

6. Negotiate more than salary

If the salary can't move	Ask about
Money now	**Signing bonus, relocation support**
Money later	**A guaranteed salary review at six months, a higher bonus target, equity**
Time	**Extra vacation days, a later start date**
Flexibility	**Remote or hybrid days, flexible hours**
Growth	**Training budget, certifications, conference attendance, a better title**

7. Mistakes that cost people money

- Accepting on the spot.
- Giving a number first with no research behind it.
- Making it personal ("I need more because my rent went up") instead of market-based.
- Apologizing for asking.
- Bluffing about another offer.
- Negotiating over and over after you've agreed. Settle the whole package at once.

8. Your negotiation checklist

1. Research the market range from at least three sources.
2. Set your walk-away, target, and ask numbers.
3. Prepare your answer to "What are your salary expectations?"
4. When the offer comes, thank them and ask for time and details in writing.
5. Practice your main ask out loud, then stop talking.
6. Have a list of non-salary items ready.
7. Get the final agreement in writing before you resign from your current job.

This guide is general information, not legal or financial advice. Pay transparency and salary history rules vary by state and city.

ready for your next step?

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Book a strategy call with Elena

One-on-one help with your interviews, resume, salary negotiation, or next career move.

Book your strategy call

Sign up for the next networking session

Two hours, live, with a small group. Practice real conversations and leave with scripts you can use the next day.

Save your seat

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