JOBS & CAREER · WORD-FOR-WORD SCRIPTS

The Salary Negotiation Script

Negotiating feels terrifying exactly once — then you realize employers expect it. Here's what to actually say, word for word.

1️⃣ When they ask your "salary expectations" early

SAY THIS

"I'd like to learn more about the role before talking numbers — could you share the budgeted range for this position?"

Whoever names a number first anchors the talk. Many states now require them to share the range if you ask. If pushed, give a range based on research, not your rent.

2️⃣ When the offer comes

SAY THIS

"Thank you — I'm really excited about this. Could you send the full offer in writing? I'd like to take a day or two to review it."

Never accept on the phone in the moment. Excitement + a short pause is normal and professional. 24–48 hours is standard.

3️⃣ The counter

SAY THIS

"I'm excited about the role and ready to accept. Based on what I found for similar positions in this market — and the [skill/experience] I bring — I was hoping for something closer to $X. Is there flexibility there?"

- [ ] Ask for ~5–10% above their number (entry-level reality zone)
- [ ] Name one specific number, not a range — ranges get the bottom
- [ ] Then **stop talking**. The silence is doing the work

4️⃣ If they say no

SAY THIS

"Understood. Is there flexibility elsewhere — a signing bonus, an earlier review with a raise on the table, extra PTO, or support for training?"

Base salary is one lever of many. A 6-month review with a raise tied to it is a very winnable ask.

🔎 Before the call: know your number

- [ ] Look up the role + your city on 2–3 salary sites; note the middle of the range
- [ ] Check the range on the job posting itself (often required now)
- [ ] Ask people in the field — "What should someone starting out expect?" works fine
- [ ] Write down: my target $______ · my walk-away $______

⚖️ The rules

- [ ] Negotiate **after** the offer, never during interviews
- [ ] They will not rescind an offer for one polite counter — this fear is famous and mostly fiction
- [ ] Never bluff about another offer you don't have
- [ ] Don't explain your expenses — the market sets your value, not your rent
- [ ] Everything agreed gets into the written offer before you sign
- [ ] Once you accept, stop negotiating and start strong

💰 Why this matters more than it feels like

	Offer as-is	+$3,000 negotiated
Year 1	$48,000	**$51,000**
Every raise after	% of $48k	**% of $51k**
Rough 10-year impact	—	**$35,000+**

Raises compound off your starting number. Five awkward minutes now is the best-paid work you'll ever do.

🎓 **Dad's Quick Take:** The worst realistic outcome of a polite counter is "no, the offer stands" — and you accept a job you were going to accept anyway. You cannot lose this hand. Play it.