



SALARY AND BENEFITS: AN OVERVIEW

Curious about what to expect when it comes to your hourly wage or salary? Check out the [NACE Salary Calculator Center](#) for an estimate based on your specific background and employment context.

The entire compensation package represents much more than just salary. A few tips:

- Go to the source—reach out and talk to someone who works in the industry you are targeting (in person, or via online message boards). Consider conducting an informational interview.
- Worth is subjective—your worth to a particular employer can vary. You may be more valuable to an employer if there are shortages of people with your skills.
- Remember that companies count benefits as part of your compensation. This could include standard things like health insurance, 401(k), and vacation time or other perks such as car allowances, health club memberships, laptops, flexible schedules, or the option to telecommute.

Entry-Level Salary Negotiation:

Adapted from a resource by Peter Vogt, MonsterTRAK Career Coach, 2010

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

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*.

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.

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.