

Negotiating Wages

Negotiating your wages might feel intimidating, especially when you're just entering the workforce. It's a crucial skill that can significantly impact your financial future and self-worth. Whether you're applying for a summer internship, part-time job, or your first post-graduation position, here's a practical guide to help you navigate wage negotiations with confidence and professionalism.

For more information, visit:

<https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/salary-negotiations/how-to-negotiate-a-higher-salary-after-a-job-offer/>

1. Know Your Worth

Before you even start applying for jobs, research the typical pay for similar roles in your area or industry. Use platforms like:

- Canada Job Bank
- Glassdoor
- Payscale
- LinkedIn Salary
- Visit Lakehead's Career Services & Co-op department website, visit the Career Zone, or book a 1:1 appointment

Take into account your skills, experience, education level, and the cost of living in the job location. Understanding your market value provides a solid foundation for effective negotiation.

2. Timing Matters

Don't bring up salary too early in the process—ideally, wait until the employer has made you an offer. Once they've decided they want you, you have more leverage.

If asked early about salary expectations, you can respond with something like:

"I'm open, but I'd like to learn more about the role and responsibilities first. Could you share the salary range for this position?"

3. Practice Your Pitch

Negotiating isn't just about numbers—it's about how you present them. Practice what you want to say. Be confident, polite, and clear. For example:

"Thank you for the offer. Based on my research and the responsibilities of this role, I was hoping for something closer to [\$X]. Is that something we can discuss?"

Avoid language that sounds unsure (e.g., “I think,” “Maybe”) and instead focus on facts and professionalism.

Salary is important, but it's not everything. You can also consider:

- Health benefits
- Paid time off
- Tuition reimbursement
- Flexible work hours
- Remote work options
- Professional development opportunities

Sometimes, if salary flexibility is limited, you can negotiate other perks that add value to your experience.

5. Prepare for Pushback

Employers might have limited budgets, especially for entry-level roles. Be prepared to respectfully push back or ask when a salary review could happen in the future.

If the offer truly doesn't meet your needs or expectations, it's okay to walk away. Turning down an offer can feel scary, but accepting a wage that undervalues you may hurt you in the long run.

6. Follow Up in Writing

Once you've reached an agreement, get everything in writing. Ask for a revised offer letter or confirmation email to ensure clarity for both sides.

7. Practice Makes Perfect

Negotiation is a skill that gets better with experience. Try it out during internships or freelance work, even in smaller contexts like hourly rates for tutoring. Each conversation is practice for the next one.

Negotiating your wages doesn't make you ungrateful or demanding—it makes you professional. The key is to be prepared, respectful, and assertive. As a university student, now is the perfect time to build this skill and set the tone for a future of fair and confident compensation.

Need help preparing for a wage negotiation? Visit the Career Services & Co-op department for personalized guidance, mock interviews, and salary data specific to your field.