

The Salary Negotiation *Guide*

Everything you need to prepare, negotiate, and close. Scripts, templates, frameworks, and the techniques that professional negotiators use.

73%

of employers are
willing to negotiate

66%

who ask receive
a higher offer

19%

average gain over
the first offer

55%

of candidates never
try to negotiate

PHASE 1: BEFORE THE NEGOTIATION

1.1 + 1.2 RESEARCH AND YOUR NUMBERS

Glassdoor and LinkedIn Salary. Your exact title. Your location. Record the median from both. That is your anchor base. Add 10 to 15 per cent for your opening number.

Anchor 10 to 15% above their likely offer. This is what you say out loud.

Target What you accept with satisfaction. Your internal benchmark.

Floor Your walkaway. Never say this number. Ever.

1.3 YOUR BATNA

What do you do if this conversation fails? A competing offer is strong. Active interviews elsewhere are moderate. Knowing you can stay put is weak but real. The stronger your alternative, the less you need to concede. If your BATNA is weak, run one more interview before negotiating.

PHASE 2: DURING THE NEGOTIATION

2.1 YOUR OPENING

"Thank you for the offer. I'm excited about this role. Based on my research, I'd like to get to [anchor]. Is that something we can work towards?"

Replace [anchor] with your number (1.2). Then stop talking. Four seconds of silence is not a long time. It just feels that way.

2.1 WHEN THEY PUSH BACK

They express hesitation or doubt about your number

Mirror their last 3 words as a question: "...not quite there?" Then pause 4 seconds. Let them fill the silence. The first person to speak after an ask often concedes.

PHASE 3: AFTER THE NEGOTIATION

3.1 BEFORE YOU END THE CALL

Repeat every agreed term out loud before you hang up. "To confirm: base of [X], sign-on of [Y], and a six-month review. Is that correct?" Get an explicit yes before ending.

3.2 EMAIL THE SAME DAY

Put every agreed term in writing. Ask them to confirm. Keep it under 150 words. Use Template 2 or 3 from section 3.2. Verbal agreements get forgotten, revised, or disputed. A written record protects both sides.

3.1 DO NOT RESIGN YET

Wait for a signed offer letter with every term in it. A verbal commitment and a signed contract are not the same thing. This rule has no exceptions.

1.4 CHANNEL

Email to open and confirm. Phone or video for the actual push. Face-to-face for rapport-heavy internal raises. Confirm every agreed term in writing the same day the conversation happens. Do not rely on verbal memory.

2.1 WHEN THEY SAY "NO FLEXIBILITY"

They say the band is fixed or there is no room on base

"How am I supposed to accept this when the market puts fair value higher?" Then pause. This is a calibrated question (Voss 2.3): it puts the problem back in their court without making a demand.

2.2 WHEN THEY OFFER A BENEFIT INSTEAD

They offer holiday, sign-on, or remote days instead of base movement

"I appreciate that. Let's settle the salary question first, then we can come to the package." Never let a benefit close a salary negotiation. Agree salary. Then negotiate benefits separately.

2.1 WHEN SALARY IS CONFIRMED FIXED

They confirm the band is genuinely immovable on base

"If base is fixed, I'd like to explore the package: a sign-on, one extra day of leave, and a six-month review rather than annual. Can we work with any of those?" (Script 5)

2.4 NEVER DO THESE

Give your number first: let them anchor, then counter

"I feel I deserve more": always argue from market data

Accept or decline on the spot: take 24 hours

Fill the silence after your ask: just pause

Let a benefit close a salary conversation: salary first

All sections referenced above (1.1 to 3.3) are covered in full in the pages that follow. The cheat sheet at 3.3 has the same quick-reference on one printable page.

WHAT IS IN THIS GUIDE

PHASE 1: BEFORE

- 1.1 Market rate research method
- 1.2 Your three numbers
- 1.3 Building your BATNA
- 1.4 Choosing your channel

PHASE 2: DURING

- 2.1 The 5 word-for-word scripts
- 2.2 Salary vs benefits: the sequence
- 2.3 Advanced techniques
- 2.4 The 6 most expensive mistakes

PHASE 3: AFTER

- 3.1 Closing and confirming terms
- 3.2 The 3 email templates
- 3.3 Quick-reference cheat sheet

Use this guide alongside The Negotiation Room practice tool. The scripts and techniques named here are the same ones the AI coach will reference in your feedback.

1.1

Market Rate *Research*

How to find your anchor number in under 30 minutes.

Every strong negotiation starts before you walk into the room. Your anchor must be grounded in data, not gut feel. Data earns movement. Gut feel earns a polite refusal.

1

Pull three independent data points

Use Glassdoor, LinkedIn Salary, and Reed or Totaljobs. Search your exact job title and filter by location. Record the median from each. Your anchor base is the average of the three medians. The median is credible; the ceiling is not.

2

Adjust for four factors

Company size (larger companies pay more), sector (financial services and tech carry premiums), your experience relative to the role average (above-average experience justifies above-median pay), and total comp (equity, pension match, bonus target). If base is genuinely fixed, total comp becomes your lever.

THE SOURCING RULE (FISHER AND URY: OBJECTIVE CRITERIA)

When you cite market data, name the source. "Based on Glassdoor and LinkedIn Salary for this title in London" is more persuasive than "based on my research". Specificity signals preparation. This is the principle of objective criteria from *Getting to Yes*: you are negotiating against an external standard, not a personal preference. It is much harder to reject.

Your Three *Numbers*

Set these before any conversation. Write them down. Do not improvise them in the room.

Anchor What you open with. Set it 10 to 15 per cent above the offer you expect. This is the number you say out loud when making your ask. If they offer £50,000, your anchor is £57,000 to £58,000. The anchor shifts the entire range of what "reasonable" looks like: research from Harvard consistently shows higher first offers produce higher final agreements, even when both parties know the opening is aggressive.

Target What you would accept with genuine satisfaction. This is your internal benchmark: if you land here or above, the negotiation has succeeded. It should be informed by your market rate research from 1.1 and adjusted for total comp. Keep this in your head only.

Floor Your walkaway number: the minimum below which you decline the offer. Never say this number out loud. Never hint at it. The moment they know your floor, your target becomes your ceiling. Your floor is a private decision, not a negotiating position.

Your *BATNA*

Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. The single most important factor in how much leverage you have.

The side with the better alternative has less pressure to concede. Your BATNA does not just protect you from a bad deal: it changes how you carry yourself in the conversation. Confidence in a negotiation is almost always BATNA confidence in disguise.

1 Assess what you actually have

A competing offer is a strong BATNA. Active final-round interviews elsewhere are a moderate one. The ability to stay in your current role is a weak but real one. No alternative at all means your floor is effectively zero: avoid this position if you can.

2 Strengthen it before you start

If your BATNA is weak, consider running one or two more interviews before negotiating. You do not need to disclose anything. You just need to know the alternative exists. Even a second process in progress changes your internal posture, which changes your tone, which changes the outcome.

3 Think about their BATNA too

How much do they need you specifically? If you are a rare profile, a finalist from a long search, or a specialist in a hard-to-hire area, their BATNA (re-running the search at 20 to 30 per cent of annual salary in recruitment costs) is expensive. You have more leverage after an offer than at any other point in the relationship.

Choosing Your Channel

Phone, face-to-face, and email each require different preparation and tactics.

Most salary negotiations happen across multiple channels: an email to open the conversation, a phone or video call for the actual push, and a follow-up email to confirm what was agreed. Understanding what each channel is good for prevents costly mistakes.

Phone or Video

- Best for: the actual ask and counteroffer
- Prepare notes and keep them visible
- Stand up or sit upright: posture affects tone
- Slow down by 20 per cent: silence reads as confidence
- Never give an answer immediately: "Let me think about that" buys you time
- After the call: send a confirmation email the same day

Face to Face

- Best for: building rapport and reading reactions
- 38 per cent of persuasion comes from tone of voice, not words
- Lean forward slightly when making your ask
- After you name your number: stop talking. Hold the silence.
- Do not accept or decline on the spot: "I'd like to reflect on this overnight"
- Confirm all agreed terms in writing before leaving

Email

- Best for: opening the conversation and confirming terms
- Creates a written record you can reference later
- Prevents impulsive concessions under pressure
- Keep every email under 150 words
- End every email with a direct question or clear next step
- Never apologise for negotiating

RECOMMENDED SEQUENCE

Use email to signal that you want to discuss salary and present your market data. Then use a phone or video call to make the actual ask and handle objections. Then use email again to confirm the final terms. Each channel does what it is best at.

2.1

The 5 *Word-for-Word* Scripts

One script for each of the five hard moments. Memorise the structure, not the exact words.

SCRIPT 1 The Benchmarked Ask

Use when: first offer is made

"Thank you. I'm genuinely excited about this role and the team. I've done some research: the market range for this title in [location] on Glassdoor and LinkedIn Salary sits at [X to Y]. Based on my background in [specific area], I'd like to get to [Z]. Is that something we can work towards?"

Why it works: It leads with enthusiasm rather than confrontation, anchors to external data rather than personal need, names the sources (credibility), and cites specific experience (justification). Ending with a question invites dialogue rather than forcing a yes or no.

IF THEY RESIST IMMEDIATELY: MIRROR FIRST (VOSS)

"...not quite there?" [pause] "Help me understand where the number sits in your band. That gives me something to work with." Mirroring means repeating their last two or three words with a slight upward inflection. It costs nothing and almost always makes them elaborate.

SCRIPT 2 The Value Anchor

Use when: asking for an internal raise

"I'd like to talk about my salary. Over the past 12 months, I've [specific, quantified achievement]. I've also looked at the market, and for someone doing what I'm doing at this level, the range is [X to Y]. I'd like to move to [Z]. I think that reflects both what I'm delivering and where the market sits."

Why it works: It separates two arguments: your performance and the market. Either argument alone can be dismissed. Together, they are harder to reject. Quantifying the achievement, not just describing it, is the difference between a conversation and a negotiation.

IF THEY SAY "THIS ISN'T A GOOD TIME"

"I understand the timing. Can we agree to revisit this in [specific date, not 'a few months']?"

LABEL THEIR CONSTRAINT FIRST (VOSS)

"It sounds like the budget cycle is the real constraint here." [pause] "If that's the case, can we agree a date now so this doesn't slip?" Labeling their concern before asking for anything drops their defensiveness.

SCRIPT 3 The Evidence Hold

Use when: told there is no flexibility

"I appreciate you being upfront. The data I'm looking at puts market rate at [X] for this role, and my background in [specific area] is above average for the position. I want to join. I want to join at the right number. Is there any room to revisit, or is it worth exploring what else is flexible in the package?"

Why it works: "No flexibility" is almost never true. This script acknowledges the constraint without accepting it, re-anchors to data, and opens the door to the package without abandoning the base ask. The phrase "I want to join. I want to join at the right number." signals commitment rather than ultimatum.

CALIBRATED QUESTION ALTERNATIVE (VOSS)

"How am I supposed to accept this when the market data puts fair value higher?" A calibrated question is not a demand. It puts the problem back in their lap and invites them to solve it with you.

IF BASE IS GENUINELY FIXED

"In that case, what does have flexibility? I'm thinking about sign-on, leave, or an earlier performance review."

SCRIPT 4 The Transparent Lever

Use when: you have a competing offer

"I want to be transparent with you. I do have another offer at [X]. My preference is to join [this company] because of [specific, genuine reason]. I wanted to give you the opportunity to respond before I make a decision. What can you do?"

Why it works: Transparency builds trust where a bluff destroys it. Stating a genuine preference removes the adversarial frame: you are giving them the chance to win, not threatening them. Ending with "What can you do?" puts action on their side without making a demand.

OPEN WITH AN ACCUSATION AUDIT (VOSS)

"I know this might feel like I'm using this as a tactic. I'm really not. I genuinely want to be here." Naming the awkwardness first defuses it. People cannot hold a concern against you once you have already acknowledged it.

IF THEY ASK FOR PROOF

"I'd prefer not to share the details, but I'm happy to confirm it's a formal offer from [sector or type of company]."

SCRIPT 5 The Package Pivot

Use when: base is genuinely fixed

"If the base is fixed, I'd like to explore the package. A sign-on to bridge the gap, one additional day of leave, and a six-month performance review rather than annual: together those would make a real difference to my decision. Can we work with any of those?"

Why it works: Asking for three things makes it easy for them to say yes to two. It signals you have done your homework on what companies typically have flexibility on. The phrase "make a real difference to my decision" is honest and concrete without being threatening.

ADDITIONAL LEVERS TO NAME

Remote working days, training or development budget, title adjustment, start date flexibility, pension match uplift, health insurance tier, equity or share options.

Salary vs Benefits: *The Sequence*

Never negotiate salary and benefits at the same time. Agree one first, then move to the other.

The most common mistake in a package negotiation is allowing salary and benefits to be traded off against each other in real time. If you are discussing base salary and the hiring manager offers an extra week of holiday instead of a higher number, you have allowed them to close one conversation with another. Do not let that happen.

STEP 1: SALARY ONLY

Negotiate base salary first and bring it to a conclusion. Either they meet your number, they make a final firm offer, or they confirm the band is genuinely fixed. Only once you have a clear and final position on base do you move to the package.



STEP 2: PACKAGE ONLY

With salary agreed (or confirmed as fixed), now negotiate benefits as a separate conversation. Treat them as additive, not as a substitute for the salary movement you did not get. Use Script 5: The Package Pivot.



STEP 3: CONFIRM IN WRITING

Once both are agreed, confirm everything in a single written summary before you sign anything. Use Email Template 3: The Conditional Acceptance.

What to negotiate in benefits

Not all benefits are equally worth fighting for. Prioritise by value and flexibility:

Benefit	Why it matters	Employer flexibility
Sign-on bonus	Bridges the salary gap without changing the recurring payroll cost	High
Early performance review	Gets you to market rate faster without a permanent commitment now	High
Additional leave	One extra day costs the employer little but has real value to you	Medium
Remote working days	Reduces commuting cost and time: effectively increases your real-terms pay	Medium
Learning and development budget	Direct investment in your market value: ask for a specific amount, not a vague commitment	Medium
Pension match uplift	If they match contributions, even a 1 per cent increase has multi-year compounding value	Low
Title adjustment	Affects your next negotiation: a stronger title anchors your market value upward	Low

THE TRADE-OFF TRAP

If the hiring manager says "we cannot do [X] on salary but we could offer an extra week of holiday", do not respond to that offer. Instead say: "I appreciate that. Let's settle the salary question first and then come back to the package." This prevents a weak benefit from closing a strong salary negotiation.

Advanced Techniques

From Never Split the Difference (Chris Voss) and Getting to Yes (Fisher and Ury). Use these once you have the basics right.

VOSS

Mirroring

Repeat their last two or three words as a question, then stop. They almost always elaborate, and elaboration reveals information you can use.

"...the band is fixed?" [pause 4 seconds]

VOSS

Labeling

Name what you think they are feeling before you ask for anything. A correct label drops defensiveness. An incorrect one gets corrected, which also gives you information.

"It sounds like the budget cycle is the real constraint here."

VOSS

Calibrated questions

Open questions starting with How or What. They put the problem back in the other person's court without issuing a demand. Never use Why: it sounds accusatory.

*"How am I supposed to make this work?" /
"What would need to be true to get to [X]?"*

VOSS

The accusation audit

Name the concern they might be holding before they raise it. This disarms it. People cannot use a concern against you once you have already acknowledged it.

"I know this might feel like I'm using this as a tactic. I'm really not."

FISHER AND URY

BATNA awareness

Know your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement before you start. It determines how much you can concede. The stronger your BATNA, the less you need to accept a bad offer.

Section 1, Step 4 of this guide is how you build one.

FISHER AND URY

Interests vs positions

Their position is "the band is fixed". Their interest is "close the hire efficiently at budget". Interests are almost always more flexible than positions. Find theirs and work with them.

"What would make it easier for you to get to [X]?"

FISHER AND URY

Objective criteria

Market data is a standard that exists outside the negotiation. Insisting on fair value based

FISHER AND URY

Separate people from the problem

The recruiter is not your adversary. The gap between offer and market rate is. Make them

on external evidence is harder to reject than a personal preference.

"The Glassdoor median for this title in London is [X]. Can we use that as our benchmark?"

your ally against the gap, not your opponent in a contest.

"My concern is purely the number. I have no issue with the role or the team."

THE ACKERMANN METHOD (VOSS): FOR BIDDING SEQUENCES

If you need to make multiple counter-offers, use the Ackermann model. Open at 65 per cent of your target, then move to 85, 95, and finally 100 per cent. Each increment is smaller, which signals you are reaching your true limit. End on a precise, odd number (e.g. 63,400 rather than 63,000): precision signals research, not rounding.

The 6 Mistakes That *Cost You Most*

Most negotiations are lost before they start. These are the six most expensive errors.

X Giving your number first

If they ask for your current salary or your expectations, deflect. "I'd prefer to understand the full scope of the role and the band before naming a number." The first number anchors the conversation: letting them anchor first is a gift you do not have to give.

X Needs-based framing instead of value-based framing

"I need this because of my mortgage" is not a business argument. "The market rate for this role is X and my experience is above the median" is. Market-based approaches succeed 79 per cent more often. Always give them a reason they can repeat to their own manager.

X Accepting or declining on the spot

You are never obliged to respond immediately. "Thank you. I'd like to take 24 hours to consider this properly." Employers expect this. An immediate yes signals that you anchored too low. An immediate no closes a door that did not need to close.

X Treating "no flexibility" as the final word

Fewer than 5 per cent of salary bands are truly immovable. "No flexibility on base" often means "I need a business case to take to my manager." Give them one. Reference Script 3: The Evidence Hold.

X Negotiating salary and benefits simultaneously

This allows a cheap benefit to close an expensive salary conversation. Settle base first. Then treat benefits as a separate, additive discussion. See Section 4: The Sequence.

X Filling the silence after your ask

After you name your number, stop talking. The first person to speak after an ask often concedes. Four seconds of silence feels like an eternity. Let it run. They are thinking, not rejecting.

3.1

Closing and *Confirming*

A verbal agreement is not an agreement. Close every negotiation in writing.

1

Summarise what was agreed verbally

Before the call ends or the meeting closes, repeat back every element that was agreed. "To confirm: base of [X], sign-on of [Y], and a performance review at six months. Is that correct?" Get an explicit yes before you end the conversation.

2

Send a written confirmation the same day

Use Email Template 2 (the follow-up) or Email Template 3 (the acceptance). Put every agreed term in writing and ask them to confirm. Verbal agreements are routinely "forgotten" or revised. A written record protects both parties.

3

Wait for the written offer before you resign

Do not give notice at your current employer until you have a signed offer letter with every agreed term in it. This is non-negotiable. A verbal commitment and a signed contract are not the same thing.

4

Note your starting salary and review date

Your starting salary is the baseline for every future raise. If you negotiated an early review date, add it to your calendar the day you start. These reviews do not happen automatically. You have to initiate them.

3.2

The 3 *Email* Templates

Copy, fill in the placeholders, and send. Keep every email shorter than you think it needs to be.

EMAIL 1 OF 3

The Counter Offer

To: [Recruiter or Hiring Manager name]

Subject: [Job title] offer

Hi [Name],

Thank you for the offer. I'm genuinely excited about the role and the team. I do want to discuss the salary.

Based on my research using Glassdoor and LinkedIn Salary for [job title] in [location], the market range sits at [X to Y]. Given my background in [2 to 3 words: e.g. "enterprise sales and FMCG"], I'd like to get to [Z].

I want to make this work. Is that something we can explore?

Best,

[Your name]

The Follow-Up (after a verbal conversation)

To: [Recruiter or Hiring Manager name]

Subject: Following up: [Job title] offer

Hi [Name],

Following our conversation on [day], I wanted to put my position in writing so there is no ambiguity.

My target is [Z]. If base is constrained, I'm also open to exploring [sign-on / additional leave / earlier review date] as part of the package.

I'm committed to this role and want to close this quickly. What is the best next step?

Best,

[Your name]

The Conditional Acceptance

To: [Recruiter or Hiring Manager name]

Subject: Re: [Job title] offer acceptance

Hi [Name],

I'm pleased to accept the offer for [Job title] at [Company]. I look forward to starting on [start date].

To confirm what we discussed: base of [X], [plus sign-on of Y], [and a performance review at the six-month mark]. Please confirm these in the written offer and I will countersign promptly.

Looking forward to joining the team.

Best,

[Your name]

Quick-Reference *Cheat Sheet*

Print this page. Have it in front of you before the call.

THE NEGOTIATION ROOM: QUICK REFERENCE

PHRASES TO USE

"Based on my research, the market range is..."

"I want to make this work. Is there flexibility to..."

"If base is fixed, what else is flexible?"

"I want to join. I want to join at the right number."

"Could you help me understand where this sits in your band?"

"What can you do?" (then stop talking)

"Let me settle the salary question first, then we can come to the package."

Voss: "...not much flexibility?" [mirror + pause]

Voss: "It sounds like budget is the real constraint here."

Voss: "How am I supposed to make this work?"

Fisher: "The market data says X. Can we use that as our benchmark?"

PHRASES TO AVOID

"I feel I deserve more." (not an argument)

"I need [X] for my expenses." (not their problem)

"I'm sorry to ask, but..." (apologising weakens the ask)

Any figure below your target (you cannot un-anchor)

"That's my final offer." (said too early: kills dialogue)

Responding to a bad benefit offer without settling salary first

THE THREE NUMBERS

Anchor: 10 to 15% above likely offer. What you ask for.

Target: What you will accept with satisfaction.

Floor: Your walkaway. Never disclose this.

THE 3-SENTENCE FORMULA (WORKS IN ALMOST ANY SCENARIO)

"Thank you for the offer. I'm excited about this role. Based on my research and experience, I'd like to get to [Z]: is that something we can work towards?"

Use this when you are unsure which script applies. Lead with enthusiasm, anchor to data, end with a question.