

Salary Requirements:

How To Address The *Dreaded* Question

Many people are confused about how to address salary requirements when an employment ad asks the candidate to include this with their application information. Most people make one of two mistakes by either ignoring the request or simply answering 'negotiable'. Both options will put your resume in danger of ending up in the "NO" pile by the HR Manager.

Why do employers ask for that information?

There are a couple of reasons why some employers ask for this information, and one answer may be a bit surprising. Of course some employers truly do need to know what your salary requirements are, but their reason for asking is simply a way to narrow down the pool of candidates. If your salary requirements are way above what the position or organization is able to pay, you will most likely be eliminated from the candidate pool.

However, the most common reason is the most surprising. **Many employers ask for this information specifically as a screening tool to eliminate those who ignore or sidestep the request.** Ignoring the question or answering with a vague, non-committal 'negotiable' is **not** what the employer expects. They **expect** you to provide solid information.

How to appropriately address the request

As a job seeker it is YOUR responsibility to know your worth and value, understand the market in which you live and most of all have a clear and solid understanding of what you need to make in order to maintain your lifestyle or simply pay your bills.

If the request is made in the job posting, you need to address the request in your cover letter when applying. A recommendation is to add the response to the closing paragraph of the cover letter by being direct. ..."**To respond to your request for salary requirements, based on- my years of experience, training and education and my knowledge of the local economy, I feel that a salary within the range of \$60,000 - \$70,000 would be fair**". Always provide a salary range and never lock in to a single number.

If the request comes up in the interview, you have a couple of options. You can use the same line of thinking as above and provide a salary range making sure to let the company know you did your research. Or you can state that since you do not yet know the full scope of responsibilities of the position, you are not comfortable discussing a salary at this time. Taking the second approach, however can be perceived as a negative and may be an option better

used with caution. However, based on the interviewer and how you feel it would be perceived, the latter option is a viable and effective one.

Common mistakes when addressing salary requirements

Some of the more common mistakes job seekers make when addressing salary requirements can have a negative impact on not only their job search, but on their life as well.

1. **Purposely stating a low salary requirement just to get in the door.** Too many job seekers fall in to this self imposed trap, feeling that if they low-ball their salary requirements, then they will get hired. Once the employer sees what a great worker they are, they will be given a raise and all will be well with the world. While it is true that this tactic may get you the job offer, there are three distinct problems with this train of thought.
 - a. The employer is most likely NOT going to give you a raise even if they realize how great you are. The reality is, in most organizations, raises are given on a schedule and most supervisors wouldn't be able to give a raise even if they wanted to. Even if they were, realistically you would have to wait at least 9 months to a year before you have had the opportunity to prove yourself worthy of such a merit raise.
 - b. Candidates find they cannot live on the low salary they requested and are back in a job search within a year of their hire date. Not having a clear understanding of what you need to make in order to pay your bills is one of the biggest mistakes job seekers make. Hoping to get in the door at a wage much lower than what you need to pay your bills with the unrealistic expectation of getting that raise for being such an outstanding employee is not going to happen. You will end up being unhappy, unable to pay your bills and back in the job market much sooner than later.
 - c. Candidates are afraid that their true salary requirements may be above what the employer is willing or able to pay. If that is the case and a candidate is requesting what they honestly know they are worth and need to maintain their household, then the company is **not a viable employment option**. If the organization is not able or willing to pay a candidate what they truly need to make, then being eliminated is a good thing.

- 2. Ignoring the request for salary information or stating salary requirements are 'negotiable'.** Some job seekers choose to ignore the request for salary information. Many employers view ignoring a request for information as the candidate's inability to follow direction and will use this as one of their main screening tools. Along this same line of thought, the use of 'negotiable' as the answer to the salary requirement request is considered an unacceptable option as well. Answering negotiable is not providing the employer with the information they requested. **As an informed job seeker it is your responsibility to know what you are worth and what the cost of living and salary outlook for your profession is within your region.** To be able to better determine what your salary requirements are, access some of the resources below for more information.

Resources for salary information are:

Get specific salary information per job title and location

Salary.com	www.salary.com
Pay Scale	www.payscale.com
Salary Expert	www.salaryexpert.com

Get salary/cost of living comparisons

Best Places	www.bestplaces.net
City Rating	www.cityrating.com/costofliving.asp