KESTON SCHOOL

WORK & WEALTH · FREE SAMPLE

Negotiate Your Salary

Prepare, ask and answer calmly when pay is on the table

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will know your number, have a short evidence-based case, and be able to ask for better pay and answer the usual replies calmly, whether you are weighing a job offer or asking for a raise.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Negotiate Your Salary Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

The Talk You Keep Skipping

Recognize how you avoid pay conversations, why the usual approaches fail, and what a calm, prepared alternative looks like.

The email arrives on a Tuesday afternoon. The recruiter is warm, the team sounded great, and there it is: an offer, with a salary figure in bold. Your first feeling is relief. Your second is a small, nagging thought that the number is a little lower than you hoped. You draft a reply that says *Thank you so much, I am happy to accept*, and then you sit there with your cursor over the send button, wondering whether you are supposed to say something else.

Most people hit send. A year later, sitting in a review meeting, they do something similar. The manager says the budget is tight this year, offers a small increase, and they nod and say thanks. The conversation they wanted to have never happens.

Why we accept the first number

If you recognize yourself in that scene, you are in large company. Plenty of capable, confident people go quiet when the topic turns to their own pay. The reasons are usually some mix of these:

- **Fear of losing the offer or looking ungrateful.** It can feel as if asking for more might make the other side change its mind or think less of you.
- **Not knowing what is normal.** If you have no idea what the role usually pays, any number can seem reasonable, and asking for more can feel like guessing.
- **Money feels personal.** Many people grew up in homes where money was not discussed, or was discussed only in stressful moments. Talking about it with a near-stranger feels awkward.
- **A belief that good work speaks for itself.** It is comforting to think that if you do excellent work, someone will notice and pay you fairly without being asked.

All of these are understandable. None of them is a reliable way to be paid what your work is worth.

Three approaches that rarely work

When people do try to raise pay, they often fall into one of three patterns.

1. Waiting to be noticed. You work hard, take on extra tasks and hope your manager will bring up a raise. Sometimes this happens. Often it does not, not because your manager does not value you, but because they are busy, have their own budget pressures, and assume you are content if you say nothing. Silence is easy to read as satisfaction.

2. Winging it. You decide to bring it up in the moment, without preparation. In the meeting, your heart rate climbs, you lose your thread, you mention a number you did not plan, or you apologize for asking at all. When the manager responds with *The budget is set for this year*, you have nothing to say back, so the conversation ends.

3. The ultimatum. After months of frustration, you finally say something like *I need a raise or I will have to start looking elsewhere.* Occasionally this works, especially if you have a real offer in hand. More often it puts your manager on the defensive, damages trust, and leaves both of you feeling cornered. Even if you get the raise, the relationship can take a hit.

What these three have in common is that they leave the outcome largely to chance or to pressure. There is a better middle path.

> **Key idea:** A pay conversation is a work task like any other. You would never present a project without preparing. Your own pay deserves the same care.

What a calm, prepared approach looks like

The approach in this book rests on a simple idea: you can prepare for a pay conversation the same way you prepare for a presentation or a client meeting. That preparation has three parts, and each gets its own chapter later.

- **Know your number.** You find out what similar roles pay and decide on three numbers before you talk: the figure you are aiming for, the figure you will open with, and the point below which you would rather keep your options open.
- **Build your case.** You collect specific evidence of the value you bring, then shape it into a short case you can explain in about a minute.
- **Ask, then pause.** You make a clear request, stop talking, and use prepared answers for the replies you are most likely to hear.

None of this requires you to become a hard-nosed negotiator. You do not need to bluff, threaten or play games. In most workplaces, the people who do best in pay conversations are calm, prepared and pleasant to work with. They make it easy for the other side to say yes.

What this book covers, and what it does not

This book is about everyday pay conversations: accepting a job offer, asking for a raise, discussing pay when your role grows, and handling the most common replies. It is written for employees and job seekers in ordinary situations.

It does not give legal, tax or financial advice. Pay rules, employment contracts and what employers are allowed to ask vary by country, state and industry. If your situation involves a contract dispute, possible discrimination, a union agreement or anything else with legal weight, a qualified professional such as an employment lawyer, a union representative or an HR adviser is the right person to talk to. The tools here will still help you prepare, but they are not a substitute for that advice.

Try this

Within the next seven days, set a timer for fifteen minutes and answer three questions in your workbook:

1. When was the last time pay came up for you, as an offer, a review or a promotion? What did you say, and what did you wish you had said?
2. Which of the three patterns do you fall into most: waiting to be noticed, winging it, or the ultimatum?
3. What is the next realistic pay moment in your life? Write down the date if you know it: a review cycle, the end of a probation period, an interview process you are in, or simply three months from today.

You do not need to do anything about that moment yet. Naming it is enough for now. It gives the rest of this book a real target.

Next, we look at the other side of the table: how pay actually gets decided, and why that matters for how you ask.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most people accept the first number because asking feels risky, not because it is fair.
- Hoping to be noticed, winging it and ultimatums all tend to backfire.
- A pay conversation is a skill you can prepare for, like any other work task.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 The Talk You Keep Skipping

See how you have handled pay so far and name your next pay moment.

The last time pay came up for me (offer, review, promotion), what I said and what I wish I had said:

CHECKLIST

The pattern I fall into most

- [ ] Waiting to be noticed
- [ ] Winging it in the moment
- [ ] The ultimatum
- [ ] Accepting the first number without a word

RATE IT

How comfortable do I feel talking about my own pay?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 · Very uncomfortable

10 · Completely at ease

My next realistic pay moment, and its date or best guess:

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Negotiate Your Salary and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 The Talk You Keep Skipping

02 How Pay Gets Decided

03 What Silence Costs

04 Value, Not Need

05 Know Your Number

06 Build Your Case

07 Ask, Then Pause

08 Four Pay Conversations

09 When the Answer Is No

10 Make It Routine

11 Pay Across a Career

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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