

5 Things You Should Never Say During a Negotiation

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A [negotiation](#) is, simply, a mutual discussion and arrangement of the terms of a transaction or agreement — that could be about a job offer, a [salary](#) increase or a contract negotiation of any kind. The act or process of [negotiating](#), however, can be intimidating.

That's why all too many of us often shy away from asking for more and better — more [money](#), more [flexibility](#), better working arrangements, more [leave](#), a larger team, a better team, better access to material resources, more assets, better prices. While some of us are afraid to ask, some of us do ask, but stop short of asking for what we really want or admitting to our true worth.

Here's the thing: By not asking, you're missing out on money and you're putting your long-term opportunities and earning potential at stake. So you need to understand the art of negotiation. There are strategies upon strategies, and women have the skills but they don't always use the tactics.

Why? Most women are extremely uncomfortable when they have to negotiate, and some go pretty far out of their way to avoid it. If you (or someone you know) has ever said things like: "I hate to negotiate. Just the thought of it makes me want to run away, screaming!" or "I shouldn't have to brag about my work just to get a salary increase." or "Every time I get a no it makes me question my worth. Even if it's something like, 'We can't give you an increase now because sales are down.' I know logically that may be true, but emotionally it feels like a slap in the face, a [rejection](#) of the value I bring every day."

Then you'll be happy to hear that [you can negotiate](#) and do it well with a little [confidence](#) and a lot of preparation. You can influence the final deal, get an increase in your job offer and find out exactly what you need to do to get that salary increase into your boss's [budget](#) next time. Both parties can reach an agreement with a win-win outcome that comes with a [successful](#) negotiation if both parties are good negotiators.

If you'd rather die than negotiate, the most common way of dealing with it is to avoid it. It's the deadly combination of conflict and uncertainty of the outcome that triggers our survival instincts to run away. If you would much rather watch a few episodes of *Parenthood* on Netflix than face that big meeting you have tomorrow with your boss or a potential employer where you have to negotiate, know that you're not alone.

Let these numbers motivate you: *Not* negotiating is likely contributing to your pay gap. Men are not as afraid to negotiate. In fact, according to a [survey by Glassdoor](#), 59 percent of people do not negotiate their salaries. The number averages out between 52 percent of men and 68 percent of women. That's a 16-point difference between the sexes, which may be the difference between your salaries.

Preparation is 90 percent of your success. The other part is about understanding how negotiation even works. Let's start there.

First, it's important to realize that the negotiation doesn't even start until someone says "no." "Our reluctance to negotiate past 'no' is even harder because both men and women miss the key point: It's not really a negotiation if we're asking for something we know our bargaining partner also wants," writes [Victoria Pynchon of The Muse](#). "Negotiation is a conversation whose goal is to reach an agreement with someone whose interests are not perfectly aligned with yours. And let's be honest, who has relationships with people who always want what we want? No one! So if we want to get what we're entitled to get or capable of getting, we either have to negotiate past 'no' or spend the rest of our work lives being victimized by people who are happy to place themselves and their needs ahead of ours. 'No' signals an opportunity to problem-solve the conflicting and overlapping interests both parties want to serve. Invite your bargaining partner to your side of the table to figure out how both of you can get as much as each of you wants as possible."

Next, it's important to know that the bulk of any negotiation is done before the actual conversation. Planning and practicing are the keys to success, along with a few tips on what to say and what to avoid. Here are five things you should *never* say in a negotiation. These tips will help you be more effective when you negotiate your salary at a new job or a salary increase at your current job. Enter: your official negotiation training.

1) "I'd like to make *between* \$65-80k." Don't give an open-ended range.

It's a common mistake to soften your ask by using a range. It's human nature to choose the end of the range that benefits you. If you say, "I'd like to make *between* \$65-80k," you will gravitate toward the high end of the range since that would be your salary and benefit you. The [hiring manager](#) will gravitate to the low end of the range because she wants to pay you the least amount that's required to make you take the job and feel happy about it. So the number one negotiation tactic is to be explicit and be direct — that's what makes good negotiators.

It's also important to ask for more than you want so you don't suffer from buyer's remorse, which certainly wouldn't feel like a win-win negotiation even if the person you're negotiating says yes to your ask.

"If I ask for a five percent [raise](#) and my boss says 'yes' without hesitation, I generally suffer from buyer's remorse, certain that if I'd asked for seven percent or maybe even 10 percent, my bargaining partner would

have given it to me," Pynchon explains. "This is just one of the many reasons why it's important to ask for more than you actually want. The other reason to do so is the proven influence of the first number put on the table. Negotiators call that number an 'anchor' because it sets one end of the bargaining range and moves your negotiation counterpart in its direction throughout the course of the bargaining session."

The no-range idea is also true for deadlines. Rather than, "This type of project requires two to four weeks," try saying, "This type of project requires three weeks." Be direct and you'll get more of what you want.

2) "I need a raise to pay for my new house." Don't tell the other person that you have a hardship that is not related to the negotiation.

You get a raise by showing results of your work, not because your kid is off to college or you want to buy a house. You would not say, "I need a raise because I just got married and want to buy a house."

You would say, "I've shown these (specific) results and increased our sales by (\$X amount) over the last year and I'd like to review my compensation with you."

"Though we seldom reflect on our relationship with money, if asked we'd have to admit that money itself — in its tangible form — can neither sustain life nor enhance it," Pynchon explains. "Before negotiating any deal, take a look at the way in which you 'value' money," Pynchon advises. "Is it status you're seeking? Security? Education for your children? A meaningful break from work that takes you to a foreign country or high-end spa? Then ask your negotiation partner what they value, prefer, need, fear, [prioritize](#), or desire. You're apt to find yourself on the same page of value once you stop treating money as an objective measure of worth and start seeing it for what it is — a subjective experience that can make \$1,000 act in the world as if it were \$10,000." The same is true with deadlines that would put you at a disadvantage, like telling your supplier, "My client needs this by the 30th or we'll lose the deal." Consider your negotiation style in either of these situations and you'll have a better shot at a win-win outcome.

3) "What number do you have in mind?" Don't avoid the first number.

Old data might tell you that, in the process of negotiation, you should wait for their number before offering your own, but newer data shows that you can be at an advantage when you:

- Research your number, then share only the highest end of that range.
- Share one or two examples that support your number.

For example, "I've done quite a bit of research on this and I've seen that a job with these responsibilities typically pays up to \$84k. I've seen a number of [jobs](#) at X and Y companies that are comparable to this one."

Or, "The house down the street just sold for \$350k. I've seen two other listings in the neighborhood that are comparable."

"The more knowledge you have of the hidden interests and constraints under which your bargaining partner is operating, the more negotiation power you have, even in a 'seller's' market," Pynchon adds.

She also says that you can go ahead and take credit for things that you can't necessarily prove. It's just another part to the art of negotiation that's often overlooked.

"Go ahead," she says. "Take credit for last quarter's increase in net profits even if you can't prove it. You don't have to file a declaration under penalty of perjury or testify under oath on the witness stand. You're highly unlikely to be cross-examined because your negotiation partner can't prove that your causal assertion is untrue. Millions of years of 'common sense' support your assertion that correlation *is* causation."

4) "How could you make such a low offer when I'm worth so much more?" Don't take things personally.

Women have a tendency to take things personally and a negotiator can take advantage of that. The other person might share a number with you, especially if you let them throw out the first offer, that's intentionally absurdly low. If you react emotionally, you tend to lose control and say something you regret or get quiet or just accept the offer because you don't know what else to do.

Emotional intelligence is important in business but the opposite can be true in negotiations, especially for your salary. Do everything you can to remove your emotions from the conversation.

Instead of getting emotional, get curious. Ask a question like, "I'm curious how you came up with that offer."

Then listen to be sure they answer the question. The other person might say, "That's what we have in the budget," which doesn't answer your question. "I understand that's what you have in the budget, and I'm curious about how you came up with that number." You may have to ask nicely two or three times before they hear you.

"Understand that the push-back you're getting is just an opportunity to problem-solve in a way that satisfies your interests and the other party's interests at the same time," Pynchon explains.

5) "Let me be completely honest with you." Don't share too much for the sake of "being authentic."

Only share information that's relevant to the situation. It's tempting to try to find an authentic connection with the other person by over-sharing. Women especially tend to negotiate with the relationship in mind, while men are more focused on winning. You don't have to go overboard on either.

Stick to the facts of the negotiation, like the results you've prepared to justify a salary increase or your stellar performance at your last company that have earned you a salary at the high end of the range.

Instead of over-sharing, build rapport by asking the other person questions. Ask what they like about the company, what they see in their own future, where they started out in their career. These open and genuinely

curious questions build rapport without you spilling your guts out or accidentally sharing information that might hurt your case.

The bottom line: Taking the time to prepare and practice for your negotiations will give you a boost of confidence for the big day. A big part of this is thinking through what to say and what not to say.

Once you've thought through what to say, practice saying it out loud. Things sound different when you say them. You want what you say to easily roll off your tongue, not get boobie-trapped by lack of practice!

Negotiation and [conflict resolution](#) will come up a lot in life regarding different issues. Now you're equipped with the skills and know the tactics to position yourself for success. Just remember: A successful negotiation, a win-win negotiation, in other words, is one in which both parties keep an open mind. You might have a different negotiation style, but you can reach conflict resolution if you both [respect](#) the process of negotiation and meet in the middle regarding whatever issues are at hand.