



HR Negotiation Vocabulary

The words and phrases in this guide are not exhaustive. Each job has very specific perks and benefits and we have focussed mainly on the financial aspects of negotiation as this was most requested by our students. To get the most out of this vocabulary section, we recommend starting with the simple salary, benefits and negotiation word lists. Once you feel comfortable with these, move on to the more complex phrases.

Salary Word List

These basic salary terms should be familiar. But we invite you to try them with different examples to refresh your memory. Note that using the “would” form with these words helps keep your communication polite.

Term	Meaning	Example
base salary	salary excluding any bonuses or extras	<i>Typically, we offer around \$60,000 in base salary for junior positions.</i>
starting salary	the amount of pay an employee receives when they start the job	<i>Your starting salary would be \$75,000.</i>
compensation	salary usually including benefits such as stocks or stipends	<i>Your compensation would also include a commuter allowance, signing bonus and equity.</i>
salary band	a range of salary amounts. Usually narrow or wide	<i>The salary band for this role is \$60-80k. We feel this is a wide salary band.</i>
x-figure salary (5-figure, 6-figure)	to describe the salary amount in terms of numbers, e.g. 100,000 is a 6-figure salary	<i>To join the company I would require a six-figure salary.</i>
net salary	salary after taxes/deductions	<i>Your net starting salary would be \$60,000.</i>
gross salary	salary before taxes/deductions	<i>The gross salary for this role is \$100,000.</i>

Perks and Benefits Word List

This list is non-exhaustive but does feature some of the most common benefits offered to candidates. Try and learn this with an example for each. Which of these apply to your company? Why not make your own cheat sheet with any examples that are missing!

Term	Meaning	Example
signing bonus	an amount of money paid when a candidate signs a contract	<i>Most hires at our company do receive a signing bonus.</i>
stock	a stake in a company	<i>All new senior hires receive an amount of stock in the company.</i>
year-end or performance bonus	an extra amount of compensation given at the end of the year based on performance	<i>In this role you would be eligible for a 10% performance bonus.</i>
commuter benefits	an allowance given for traveling to and from the workplace	<i>If you live further than 10 miles away, you will be eligible for commuter benefits.</i>
relocation expenses	an allowance to cover the cost of moving to a new city for the job	<i>We do offer relocation expenses up to a total amount of \$5,000.</i>
equipment stipend	an allowance for equipment such as computers	<i>We have a fixed equipment stipend in place.</i>
educational stipend	a training allowance	<i>All our employees receive an educational stipend of \$2,000 a year for personal development.</i>
childcare stipend	an allowance for parents to cover childcare costs	<i>All employees with children are entitled to our childcare stipend.</i>
extra vacation time	additional days off work	<i>As part of our offer, we are prepared to add an extra two day's vacation.</i>
later start date	starting later than scheduled	<i>I would be happier with a later start date.</i>
shares	stocks in a company	<i>We would issue you with 100 shares in the company when you join.</i>
Restricted Stock Units (RSUs)	a type of stock or share in a company, usually with a specific condition attached, typically that they can only be sold after a certain amount of time	<i>On joining, we would offer you 1,000 RSUs at the current price of \$10 a share.</i>
stock options	stock in a company	<i>As part of my counter-offer, I would like to negotiate some stock options.</i>
equity	stock in a company, usually given as a percentage	<i>As one of the first 20 people to join the company, you would receive 0.5% equity.</i>
market value	the current value of a company's stock	<i>Our market value is currently \$10 a share.</i>

Negotiation Word List

These words will help you refine your communication when negotiating with candidates. Note if you feel that some of these are unfamiliar, try and listen out for when your colleagues use these phrases. You'll be surprised how often you hear some of them.

Term	Meaning	Example
initial offer	the first offer made to a candidate	<i>Our initial offer comprises 70k in base, stock options and a signing bonus.</i>
counter-offer	an offer made in response to a previous offer including changes	<i>Our counter-offer includes a signing bonus.</i>
proposal	another word for 'offer'	<i>Are you prepared to accept our proposal?</i>
salary expectations	the salary a candidate expects to earn	<i>What are your salary expectations for this role?</i>
ballpark figure	an estimated amount	<i>Can you give me a ballpark figure for your starting salary expectation?</i>
starting point	beginning of a negotiation	<i>Well, \$70,000 in base salary is a great starting point, but it's a little lower than my expectations.</i>
to lowball/highball	to make an offer much lower or higher than expected	<i>I feel like the candidate is highballing us to try and get a better package.</i>
deadlock	when the parties cannot reach an agreement	<i>We seem to have reached deadlock with the negotiations.</i>
bottom line	the most important factor or point	<i>The bottom line is we really want to hire you.</i>
leverage	the strength of your negotiating position	<i>With his 10 years' of experience, she really has a lot of leverage for this position.</i>
deal-breaker	a very important or essential condition to a contract which, if unresolved during the negotiations, would cause one party to pull out of the deal	<i>The commuter allowance is a real deal-breaker for me.</i>
starting date	the date a candidate starts work with the new company	<i>We would love to agree a starting date with you as soon as possible.</i>
amendment	a change to something	<i>We have made an amendment to our initial offer.</i>

Negotiation Phrases

Now you have mastered the word lists, we are moving on to full phrases. This first group are standard phrases used when making an offer to candidates.

Phrase	Meaning	Example
to extend an offer	when a company offers a candidate a job	<i>We would like to extend to you an initial offer.</i>
to rescind an offer	when an offer is canceled	<i>Due to unforeseen circumstances, we will have to rescind the offer.</i>
to vest shares	when shares are able to be sold	<i>Your shares will vest in 4 years' time.</i>
to make a counter-offer	to make a new offer	<i>We are more than happy to make you a counter-offer.</i>
to decline an offer	to not accept an offer	<i>Unfortunately, our first choice for the role declined the offer.</i>
to weigh up the options	to review all the options	<i>This offer is really great but I need a couple of days to weigh up my options.</i>
to reach an agreement	to agree on something	<i>I'm so glad we could reach an agreement on the base salary.</i>
to be lower/higher than expectations	whether an offer is above or below what a candidate wants	<i>I have to say that the net salary is a little lower than my expectations.</i>
to make a final decision	to decide whether to take the job	<i>Based on that information I am now able to make my final decision.</i>
to improve on an offer	make an offer more attractive	<i>We can improve on our initial offer.</i>
to iterate on an offer	make another offer	<i>If necessary we will iterate on our initial offer.</i>

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Idiomatic Expressions

Now it's time to have some fun! Use these expressions below to really sound like a native speaker. We know from our students that these phrases can seem a little weird or counterintuitive. So, to boost confidence, we recommended talking them through with a friend or a [native-English teacher](#) before using them in real interviews.

Phrase	Meaning	Example
The offer is still on the table	when an offer is still available	<i>We know you have had interest from other companies, but our offer of 80k base salary is still on the table.</i>
A company exits	a company is acquired	<i>Instagram exited for \$1 billion.</i>
We can do...	an informal and friendly way to agree to a candidate request	<i>I have talked with the rest of the team, and we can do the 5k signing bonus.</i>
We are not able to do...	a casual way to decline a candidate request	<i>We are not able to do 2% in equity. However, we could do 1.5%.</i>
To have interest from other companies	when other companies want to hire a candidate	<i>We are aware you have interest from other companies, which is why we would like to improve on our initial offer.</i>
To be interviewing for other roles	to have interviews with other companies	<i>Are you interviewing for other roles at the moment?</i>
To shop an offer around	when a candidate takes an existing offer to another company for more leverage	<i>It's really important to us that, once we make an offer, candidates do not just shop it around.</i>
To arrive at a number	to come up with a salary figure	<i>We have arrived at the following number: \$100,000. Would that base salary be acceptable to you?</i>
We have taken that on board	we have acknowledged something	<i>We have taken it on board that the commuter stipend is a deal-breaker for you.</i>
We have looked at the numbers and...	to review a financial request	<i>We have looked at the numbers and we cannot increase the salary any further.</i>
To meet in the middle	to compromise	<i>If you could meet us in the middle at 100k, then we would be happy to sign you.</i>
I would sign today if...	a condition where the candidate would decline all other offers and sign with a specific company	<i>I would sign today if you could do 120k in base salary.</i>
To drop an offer	to decline an offer	<i>I am happy to drop all other offers based on your proposal.</i>
To tie up loose ends at my/your old company	to conclude employment in an organized way	<i>I think I would need around 4 weeks to tie up all the loose ends at my current company.</i>
To come aboard	to join a company	<i>We would love you to come aboard at the end of the month.</i>
Would that work for	used to ask a candidate if they would	<i>We could do 85k with 1% equity. Would that</i>

you?	accept an offer	<i>work for you?</i>
What number were you thinking of/did you have in mind?	used to ask what amount a candidate expects	<i>Regarding the signing bonus, what number did you have in mind?</i>
We will see what we can do about that.	polite way of saying you will review a request	<i>We will see what we can do about the equity package.</i>
Let me chat with my colleagues about that	polite way of saying you will review a request	<i>Let me chat with my colleagues about the signing bonus.</i>
We will come back to you	polite way of saying you will review a request	<i>We will come back to you about the RSUs.</i>
We understand that is important to you	acknowledging a point the candidate has made	<i>We understand the childcare allowance is important to you.</i>
Let me come back with a fresh offer	stating you will make a new offer	<i>Based on your feedback, let me come back to you with a fresh offer.</i>
To pull some strings	to make something happen	<i>Let me see if I can pull some strings and increase the signing bonus to 10k.</i>
To go higher	to increase an amount	<i>Could you go any higher with...? I'm sorry but we cannot go any higher than our previous offer.</i>
To turn an offer/proposal down	to reject an offer	<i>The candidate rejected Uber's offer and signed with us.</i>
To be a tough decision	a difficult decision	<i>It's a really tough decision. I need to weigh up all the options.</i>
To be on the same page	to be in agreement	<i>I think we are on the same page regarding compensation.</i>
At this stage in the negotiations	to describe how close to the beginning or the end of negotiations you are	<i>At this stage in the negotiations, we would like to make you an initial offer.</i>
To bring something to the table	to have a particular ability or level of experience	<i>She brings 5 years' experience in data science and a Master's to the table.</i>
To keep your word	to complete an action that was promised	<i>The candidate kept their word and signed the initial offer.</i>
We might be able to work on... if you could...	offering to change a condition if a candidate also changes a condition	<i>We might be able to work on our offer if you agree an early starting date.</i>
In exchange for..., would you agree to...?	offering to change a condition if a candidate also changes a condition	<i>In exchange for a higher signing bonus, would you agree to drop your other offers?</i>
ASAP	"As soon as possible." Pronounced like the letters A-S-A-P.	<i>We would love for you to join us ASAP.</i>

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