



AAUW

# WORK SMART

## Attendee Workbook

[aauw.org](http://aauw.org) · [salary@aauw.org](mailto:salary@aauw.org)  
#AAUWStartSmart

# Welcome to your AAUW Work Smart salary negotiation workshop!

The gender pay gap is real and affects women's economic security, starting from their first job.

Our goal is to equip you with the skills to negotiate better pay and benefits, helping to close the gap and achieve financial stability for all women and girls.

To empower you to advocate for yourself, we created AAUW Work Smart, a training program that will give you the skills you need to thrive in your career. This course will show you how to research your market value, teach you how to talk about salary and benefits and, best of all, provide the tools to increase your confidence and be more successful in your negotiations.

Women can't wait for equal pay. We know this course is a game changer — and we have the testimonials and results to prove it. You will come away better prepared to negotiate confidently and positioned for success!



In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gloria Blackwell". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gloria L. Blackwell  
Chief Executive Officer

## About AAUW

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is the nation's leading organization for equity in higher education and women's economic empowerment.

Founded in 1881 by women who defied society's conventions by earning college degrees, AAUW has since worked to increase women's access, opportunity, and equity in higher education through research, advocacy, and philanthropy of over \$140 million, supporting thousands of women scholars.

## Follow AAUW



## Become an AAUW Member

Your membership makes AAUW's powerful voice even stronger on critical issues affecting women and girls. Membership is open to anyone holding an associate or equivalent, bachelor's, or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university. Visit [my.aauw.org/onlinejoin](https://my.aauw.org/onlinejoin) for more.

## Empower Women in Two Minutes

Become a Two-Minute Activist! Join the AAUW Action Network to receive email alerts to contact your elected officials about public policy issues such as fair pay for women. Learn more and sign to up at [www.aauw.org/actionnetwork](https://www.aauw.org/actionnetwork).

"I was really proud of myself and filled with self-affirmation and gratitude. Being able to stand for my self-worth and then have an employer agree to what I requested was transformative."

—Katie Wynne, Work Smart participant

## The Gender Pay Gap and How It Affects You

The gender pay gap refers to the disparity in earnings between women and men across various occupations and career stages. Despite progress, this gap persists and impacts women's economic security.

Here are some key facts:

- Women are paid less than men in most occupations
- The gap affects women early in their careers and compounds over time
- It impacts ability to pay bills, reduce debt, and save for retirement
- The gap varies by race and ethnicity, with greater impact on women of color

Learn more and read AAUW's research report, *The Simple Truth About the Gender Pay Gap*, on [our website](#).

### What are some possible reasons that the pay gap exists?

- Women are overrepresented in low-wage jobs and underrepresented in high-wage ones.
- Women-dominated professions, such as health care, education and public administration are devalued because they're seen as "women's work."
- Because women are often caregivers, they face lower pay and promotion opportunities because they are assumed to be distracted and unreliable.

Did you know, only one year after college, women working full time are already paid

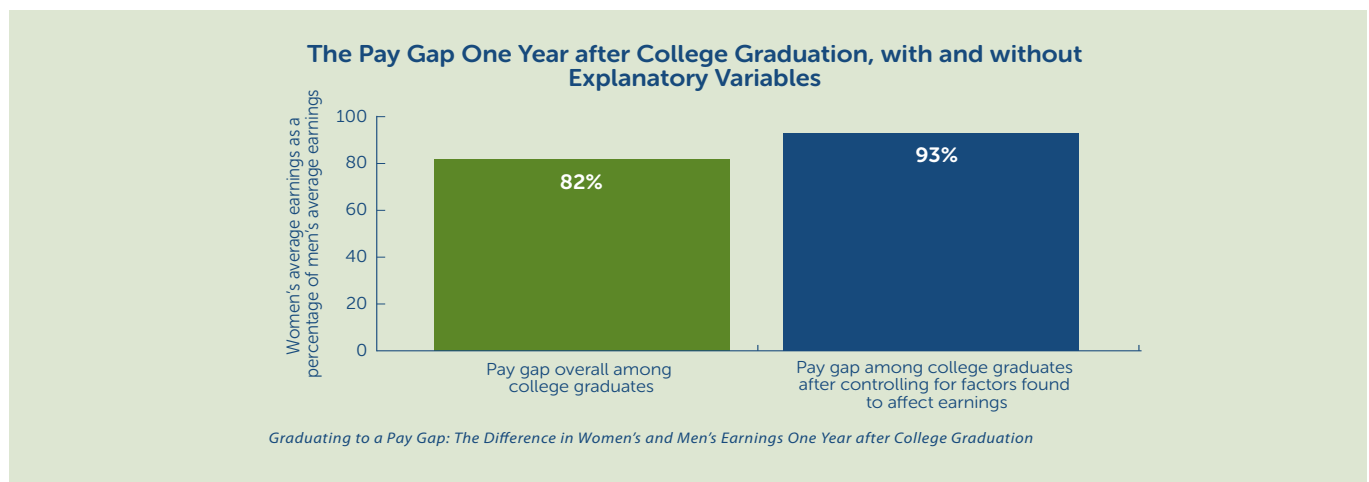


Figure 1

significantly less than their male counterparts are paid? There is an unexplained 7 percent gender pay gap.

## Negotiation Can Help

Negotiation is a powerful tool to address this pervasive issue. By advocating for fair compensation, women can improve their individual situations and contribute to closing the overall gap.

However, women face unique challenges in negotiation. Effective tactics include:

- Knowing your worth
- Clearly articulating your value
- Emphasizing shared goals
- Maintaining a positive attitude

Remember, you can pause or stop the negotiation if you need more time to plan your approach. To learn more read AAUW's annual research report [The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap](#).

## Know Your Value

Understanding and articulating your value is crucial for successful salary negotiation. Reflect on your accomplishments and skills. How do they demonstrate the contribution I can make? How do I bring value to a company or organization?

- List professional achievements, awards, and recognitions
- Identify measurable results from your work (e.g., increased revenue, expanded client base)
- Note significant projects you've contributed to
- Highlight your unique skills and expertise

Below, write down as many accomplishments, contributions, skills and relevant work or school experiences as you can.

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Take one thing you wrote down and think about what you did to make it happen. What role did you play? What were some positive results?

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Then, use this template to help you articulate your value: “I accomplished [list one accomplishment], using my [list skill used], which benefited my company by: [list results]”.

I accomplished \_\_\_\_\_ [list one accomplishment] using my \_\_\_\_\_ [skills], which benefited my company by: \_\_\_\_\_ [list results].

### Resume Writing Tips

A few ways to enhance your resume:

- Use key words from the job posting.
- Use active language.
- Focus on accomplishments not just job descriptions.
- Place the most important information at the top.

## Know Your Target Salary and Benefits

Research salary ranges for a particular job in the location you will be working and to determine a target salary.

## Assess the Market

There are many factors you should take into account when you're creating your salary targets:

- The overall economic conditions of the area, the demographics, and special conditions that might have bearing on your particular industry
- Who the company's competitors are
- The company's financial health
- Local occupational growth or decline

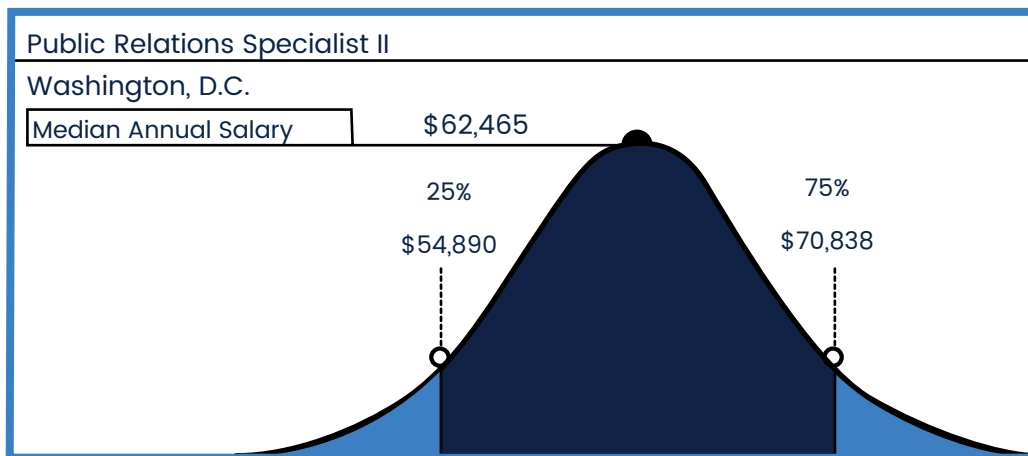


Figure 2

### Additional Salary Research Resources

Other research sources you should take advantage of include

- Glassdoor.com
- Payscale.com
- U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- LinkedIn
- The business sections of your local newspapers
- Business publications or other publications specific to your industry
- The local chamber of commerce
- Anyone who might know the company, the field or the region
- Industry compensation surveys



## Research a Target Salary and Benefits

1. Visit Salary.com and identify a job description that matches the job you are researching.
2. Compare similar job descriptions, and select the job title that most closely aligns with the job description and experience.
3. Look at the salary range for the job title from the 25th to 75th percentile, and identify a target salary (your worth based off objective, market wage data) –below, at or above the median. Aim high, but be realistic.
4. Identify a “target salary range,” using the target salary as the bottom of the range or as the “anchor”. Do not stretch more than 20 percent.
5. Create or update a realistic budget.
6. Calculate the take-home pay for the target salary at PaycheckCity.com.
7. Determine a walk-away point, or the lowest salary the applicant should be willing to accept and still reach agreement, this prevent you from accepting a salary you will later regret.
8. Factor in the value of benefits they would be likely to receive, and identify other benefits that would make an offer more enticing.

## Employee Profile

Job title \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Target salary \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Target salary range \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly budget \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Take-home pay \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Walk away point \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

List top three benefits \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Negotiating Hourly Pay?

Use the same techniques to research a target salary and target salary range. You may want to estimate a monthly or annual salary base to help you compare your pay with similar salaried positions.

To figure out an exact hourly wage from an annual salary, you need to figure out how many hours a week you work. If you work 40 hours a week, divide the annual salary by 2,080 (or multiply an hourly wage by 2,080 to determine the annual salary). If you work 37.5 hours a week, divide the annual salary by 1,950 (or multiply an hourly wage by 1,950 to determine the annual salary).

## Create a Realistic Budget

Establishing a monthly budget is essential to preparing your negotiation strategy. It helps determine your bottom line in any consideration of a job or raise.

Below, we have included a budgeting guide to assist in your preparation. Next to each category is a suggested allocation of your salary. When planning a budget, be realistic about your costs and the lifestyle that you are living or aspire to. Don't leave out things like entertainment expenses, the costs of eating out and other details.

## Types of Expenses

### Fixed Expenses

These are the absolute necessities of life including housing, food, transportation and utilities (e.g., electric, gas, water, cell phone, cable, etc.).

### Variable expenses (financial goals)

This includes savings contributions, such as retirement and savings, and debt reduction, such as student loans and credit card debt. This is your "get-ahead" category. Budgeting for this category puts you in a better financial position for the future.

### Variable expenses (personal choices)

This includes discretionary expenses like shopping, personal care, hobbies and entertainment.

You may find that percentages fluctuate slightly based on the cost of living in your area. See the following section [for more information on budgeting and financial literacy tools](#).

## More Financial Literacy and Planning Tools

### Tools to track expenses

- [Mint.com](#)
- [LearnVest.com](#)

### Other financial literacy and planning sites

- [Mymoney.gov](#)
- [Nerdwallet.com](#)
- Check out local offerings for financial literacy workshops.

### Other resources for budgeting and market conditions

- Local business section in paper or regional business publications
- Local chamber of commerce

# Olivia Taylor's Sample Monthly Budget

## Fixed Expenses (Needs)

Category	Olivia's Budget	Your Budget
Cell phone	\$70	_____
Groceries (shared)	\$200	_____
Internet/cable (shared)	\$40	_____
Laundry	\$20	_____
Rent (shared)	\$850	_____
Transportation	\$100	_____
Utilities (shared)	\$25	_____
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1,305</b>	_____

## Variable Expenses (Financial Goals)

Category	Olivia's Budget	Your Budget
Credit card payments	\$50	_____
Retirement	\$200	_____
Savings	\$200	_____
Student loans	\$100	_____
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$550</b>	_____

## Variable Expenses (Personal Choices)

Category	Olivia's Budget	Your Budget
Coffee shops	\$40	_____
Haircut	\$25	_____
Dining out/bars	\$200	_____
Fast food/ delivery	\$100	_____
Movies	\$50	_____
Music	\$20	_____
Netflix	\$10	_____
Wardrobe	\$200	_____
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$645</b>	_____
<b>Total monthly budget:</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	_____

# Know Your Strategy

## Seeking a New Job

Negotiation is a skill that can significantly impact your career and earning potential. With a solid strategy, you'll be better prepared to advocate for yourself and achieve your professional goals. This section will equip you with key tactics and responses to common scenarios, helping you navigate salary discussions with confidence and professionalism.

Remember, successful negotiation is about finding a win-win solution. Your goal is to clearly communicate your value while being open to collaborative problem-solving with your potential or current employer.

In several states, such as California, Delaware, Massachusetts and Oregon, and some cities, asking for salary history is or will be illegal. Research equal pay laws with your local government.

### 1. Delay Salary Discussion

- Deflect early salary questions until after receiving an offer
- Focus on fit and role responsibilities first
- Use phrases like “I’d like to learn more about the role before discussing salary” or “I expect my salary would align with market rates for similar positions”

### 2. Research and Prepare

- Know your target salary range based on market research (use resources like Salary.com)
- Understand the full compensation package, including benefits
- Create a realistic budget to determine your financial needs
- Identify a “walk-away point” – the lowest salary you’re willing to accept

### 3. Start High

- Begin with the upper end of your researched salary range

- Leave room for negotiation
  - Frame your ask as a range, with your target salary as the lower end
4. Use Silence Strategically
    - After stating your ask, pause and wait for a response
    - Don't rush to fill silence with justifications
    - Listen carefully to the employer's response before crafting your next move
  5. Focus on Value
    - Emphasize the unique skills and experience you bring
    - Tie your contributions to company goals and needs
    - Use specific examples of past achievements and how they relate to the role
    - Quantify your accomplishments where possible (e.g., "increased revenue by 20%")
  6. Be Prepared to Walk Away
    - Know your walk-away point
    - Be willing to decline if the offer doesn't meet your minimum requirements
    - Consider the entire compensation package, not just salary
    - Remember that walking away can sometimes lead to a better offer
  7. Consider Non-Salary Benefits
    - If salary negotiations stall, explore other benefits (e.g., flexible work hours, professional development opportunities)
    - Prioritize which benefits are most valuable to you
    - Be prepared to explain how these benefits would enhance your performance
  8. Practice Your Responses
    - Anticipate potential objections and prepare responses
    - Role-play negotiations with a friend or mentor
    - Focus on maintaining a positive, professional tone throughout the discussion

Negotiation is a normal part of the hiring process. Stay confident, be prepared,

and approach the discussion as a collaborative effort to find a mutually beneficial solution.

### **Online Applications**

Often online applications will require you to list your salary expectations. If possible, leave these fields blank, or type “zero” or “N/A”. If you must enter an actual value, put your target salary. You can always say that your expectations changed as you gained a better understanding of the role.

### **Responding to Common Scenarios**

- If asked about salary expectations early: “I’d like to learn more about the role before discussing salary. Can we revisit this once we’ve determined I’m a good fit?”
- If offered a salary below your target: “Thank you for the offer. Based on my research and experience, I was expecting something in the range of [your target range]. Can we discuss how to bridge this gap?”
- If told there’s no budget for a higher salary: “I understand budget constraints. Could we discuss other forms of compensation or benefits that might make up the difference?”
- If asked to justify your desired salary: “Based on my research of similar roles in this area, and considering my [specific skills/experience], this range reflects fair market value for the contributions I’ll bring to the role.”
- If told to wait for a future raise: “I appreciate that perspective. Given my current contributions [list key achievements], I believe an adjustment now would accurately reflect my value to the team. Could we discuss a plan for reaching my target salary over the next [timeframe]?”

Remember: Stay positive, be flexible, and focus on finding a mutually beneficial solution.

### **Assessing Benefits**

Remember that benefits are an important part of your overall compensation. You should always be thinking about how to negotiate for benefits, even if you get the salary you want.

Standard benefits may include:

- Health, dental, and vision insurance

- Retirement accounts and matching contributions
- Paid time off
- Stock options
- Parental/family leave

**Nonstandard benefits include:**

- Flextime
- Telecommute days
- Gym or wellness reimbursement
- Tuition and student loan assistance
- Commuter benefit (parking, public transportation, biking, etc.)
- Professional development programs
- On-site childcare

**Negotiable Benefits**

Benefits can significantly enhance your overall compensation package. When negotiating, consider:

- Focus on high-value benefits rather than asking for everything.
- Prioritize benefits that are most important to you.
- Remember that some benefits (like telecommuting or professional development) may be low-cost for the employer but high-value for you.
- Use benefits negotiation to compensate if your salary negotiation falls short of your target.

Here's some sample language you can use to ask for a better benefits package.

**For a smaller-than-standard package:**

Thank you for discussing the salary. Regarding benefits, could we explore adding [specific benefit, e.g., transportation assistance] to the package?

**For a standard or above-standard package:**

I appreciate the comprehensive benefits package. I'm particularly interested in [specific benefit, e.g., professional development opportunities]. Could we



discuss including this in my offer?

## Concluding the Negotiation

1. Evaluate the entire package (salary + benefits) against your research and priorities.
2. If satisfied, give a verbal acceptance.
3. Request the complete offer in writing.
4. Review the written offer carefully before signing to ensure all discussed items are included.

Benefits negotiation is an opportunity to create a win-win situation that enhances your job satisfaction and demonstrates your value to the employer.

## Earning a Raise or Promotion

### Setting the Stage

After some time, you may seek a promotion or raise at your job. You must decide when the right time is to ask for a raise. The important thing is to decide whether it is best to wait for the normal salary review process or not.

Start the process professionally by requesting a meeting to discuss your career development. Do not say you want a meeting to ask for a raise, because your boss may put off meeting with you. Your salary is an aspect of your career development.

### Preparing the Pitch

The key to a successful pitch lies in articulating your value clearly and persuasively. If you're asking for a raise or promotion, you MUST prepare your pitch before having the initial conversation.

How can you persuade your employer of your value? Refer to things like

- Specific accomplishments
- Recent increases in responsibility
- Any savings or revenue increases you've brought to the organization
- Awards, recognition, certifications or education you've pursued

- Other successes or value you've brought to the organization.

Choose compelling words: Use action verbs like you would in a résumé. Think about how you can be persuasive on each point you wish to make.

Think about the most persuasive way to organize your accomplishments within your pitch, and practice it aloud. Practice saying it to a friend, your partner or a mirror. Practice until you are comfortable, clear, and persuasive.

### **Delivering Your Pitch**

Begin by expressing appreciation for the meeting and your role in the company. Briefly outline your key achievements, using specific, quantifiable results where possible. For example:

“In the past year, I've led two PR campaigns that increased website traffic by 20,000 visitors, secured placements in top-tier media outlets including the Today Show and Wall Street Journal, and negotiated ad purchases that maintained our reach while reducing costs by two-thirds.”

After highlighting your contributions, introduce the topic of compensation. Reference your research on market rates for your role and experience level in your area. Express your desire to discuss adjusting your compensation to align with this range and reflect your value to the team.

### **Sample Language for Your Pitch**

Consider these suggestions as you prepare your pitch:

- According to my research, a fair range for people doing this job in this area is from \$\_\_\_\_\_ to \$\_\_\_\_\_
- My job description says that someone in my position should have at least \_\_\_\_\_ years of experience. I have worked in the department for more than\_\_\_\_\_ years and managed\_\_\_\_\_ people and\_\_\_\_\_ projects.
- In addition to the specific qualifications and duties this job requires, I have been responsible for \_\_\_\_\_, and I have earned these additional professional credentials:\_\_\_\_\_.
- The company's mission statement says \_\_\_\_\_. This year I contributed to the mission by achieving \_\_\_\_\_.
- The CEO said in an interview that the goal this year is to make \$\_\_\_\_\_ in profit;

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here's what I did in our department to make money for the company \_\_\_\_\_  
(or save in expenses), contributing to our bottom line.

## Persuasive Responses

Anticipate employer objections by brainstorming three to five different ways that the employer might respond during a negotiation. Use your value statements and the information you gathered in your research to prepare talking points for each potential response. Below is a sampling of potential responses from your employer you can anticipate.

**Employer:** I don't have the budget for a salary this high.

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**Employer:** I'll never be able to sell this to the boss or HR.

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**Employer:** Wait until next year.

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## Concluding the Negotiation

Based on your objective research, you should know whether or not the final salary and benefits offer is worthy of consideration. If you are satisfied with the salary and benefits you negotiated, verbally accept the offer. Be sure to ask for the complete offer in writing and read it carefully before signing to make sure everything you discussed is included.

### Embrace the "We/Us"

You might be thinking about something from your perspective, but when you make the pitch, you should frame it to show how it benefits your employer, too. Use "we" and "us" liberally in place of "I" and "me." And make sure to express your enthusiasm for the position and your interest in supporting the company's or organization's goals.

## Practice, Practice, Practice!

Your negotiation skills will not improve without practice. With each practice, you can improve your abilities to be

objective, persuasive, and strategic. The more you practice with others, the more assistance they can provide with positive and constructive feedback to improve your verbal and body language.

## Role-Play Worksheet

### Playing the Employee

Practicing is a critical component of becoming a competent negotiator. When practicing, take a few minutes and answer the questions below to prepare for your turn as the employee.

1. Decide whether you are negotiating for a new job, or raise or promotion and share that with your partner.
2. How will you start the conversation?
3. Go back to the value statements you drafted earlier in the workshops to use in your negotiations
4. Write down two benefits that would make this offer especially compelling to you
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
5. Write down the target salary range that your facilitator puts on the screen. \$\_\_\_\_\_ to \$\_\_\_\_\_

Now use your preparation and try role-playing a conversation. As you do the exercise, remember the goals: Be objective! Be strategic! Be persuasive!

### Negotiation sentence starters

These are ideas to get you started, but you should modify the phrasing to fit your

personal style and the specifics of the situation.

Thank you for meeting to discuss the details of your offer.

According to my research, a fair range for people doing this job in this area is from \$\_\_\_\_\_ to \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Given my previous experience doing \_\_\_\_\_, I believe this is a fair salary range for this position.

It sounds like you and I are on the same page about what I can contribute to the company.

### **Playing the Employer**

What salary range are you allowed to offer for this role? Write down the range the facilitator puts on the screen.

\$\_\_\_\_\_ (starting offer) to \$\_\_\_\_\_ (maximum budgeted)

### **Constraints**

- You are only authorized to offer up to the maximum budget amount your facilitator shares with you.
- You have more flexibility in negotiating benefits. Listen carefully for what your partner (the employee) is requesting.

### **Possible employer objections**

These are some ideas to get you started, but react to the particulars the employee brings forward and get creative!

- We think you are an excellent candidate for this position and a good fit in the company, however ...
- Wait another year.
- You haven't demonstrated that you're ready for those increased responsibilities.

- If I gave you this salary, you'd be the highest-paid employee in this position in our company.
- I don't have the budget for this high a salary.
- I'll never be able to sell this to the boss.
- Whoa! That's way more than I have budgeted!

## Next Steps for Salary Negotiation Success

There are many things you can do to keep your momentum going after you leave today.

- Keep practicing. Use the resources from this workshop each time you prepare to negotiate.
- Strike a pose. Research has shown that holding a power pose (think: Wonder Woman) for as little as two minutes can make you feel more confident and willing to take risks. Consider doing this exercise before going into your next negotiation to give yourself an extra boost!
- Share your stories. When you negotiate, we want to know about it! Share your experiences with us at [salary@aauw.org](mailto:salary@aauw.org). The more AAUW can showcase women negotiating, the more we can question the stereotype that women don't ask.
- Pay it forward and share AAUW Work Smart with others. Today you gained significant confidence and skills. Spread the word with other people in your life to make sure they get paid fairly, too! Talk to your facilitator about how to help bring AAUW Work Smart workshops to your community.

## Questions an Employer Cannot Ask You

There are many questions an employer cannot legally ask you. We encourage you to research these questions and prepare responses to them. Some examples of questions that you cannot be asked include

- What is your religious affiliation?
- Are you pregnant?
- What is your political affiliation?

- What is your race, color, or ethnicity?
- How old are you?
- Do you have a disability?
- Are you married?
- Do you have children or plan to?
- Are you in debt?
- Do you socially drink or smoke?

Likewise, employers cannot make stereotypical comments about women and their work habits or make assumptions about the work habits of women with children.

If you are asked these questions, you can turn the conversation toward your qualifications for the position, but you may want to consider notifying human resources.

## AAUW Research Reports

Barriers and Bias: The Status of Women in Leadership, AAUW, [www.aauw.org/research/barriers-and-bias](http://www.aauw.org/research/barriers-and-bias)

Broken Ladders: Barriers to Women's Representation in Nonprofit Leadership, AAUW, [www.aauw.org/research/broken-ladders](http://www.aauw.org/research/broken-ladders)

Deeper in Debt: Women and Student Loans, AAUW, [www.aauw.org/research/deeper-in-debt](http://www.aauw.org/research/deeper-in-debt)

Graduating to a Pay Gap: Women's and Men's Earnings One Year after College Graduation, AAUW, [www.aauw.org/research/graduating-to-a-pay-gap](http://www.aauw.org/research/graduating-to-a-pay-gap)

The Simple Truth about the Gender Pay Gap, AAUW, [www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap](http://www.aauw.org/research/the-simple-truth-about-the-gender-pay-gap)



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