

How to ask your boss for a raise, 5 steps for getting the pay you deserve



If you simply ask your boss for a raise out of the blue, it's not likely to go very far. After all, they'll most likely ask "why" and you need a good answer.

You probably have good reason to ask your boss for a raise. The longer you're in your position, the more your responsibilities expand and grow. Additionally, with more experience, the quality of your work improves. However, as your contributions to the organization grow, your pay doesn't always grow at the same rate.

While many companies provide cost-of-living increases, it's not always a guarantee. In addition, this increase only keeps up with rising costs, it doesn't necessarily increase your buying power. This leaves you with 2 options.

You could look for a position elsewhere. This can be a valid choice to make if you don't particularly care for your current position, don't see the opportunity for advancement you want, or are interested in a new venture. However, if you've landed on an article about how to ask your boss for a raise, it's more likely that you don't mind your job so much and prefer to stay.

Your second choice is to ask for a pay raise. This can seem intimidating at first. After all, discussions about pay are not often encouraged in the workplace. Beyond that, asking for a pay increase can feel vulnerable. Still, beyond the perceived discomforts, there's little true harm in doing so. Most organizations aren't likely to offer you more pay for taking on more work, but they may be willing to consider it. However, if you want the best chance of success, you'll need to build out a well-supported case to present your argument

Step 1: Do your research

If you simply ask your boss for a raise out of the blue, it's not likely to go very far. After all, they'll most likely ask "why" and you need a good answer. Before you approach the conversation, you need to do research and preparation so you can explain exactly why you deserve a pay increase.

Audit your current work

First, you need a good understanding of the work you're already doing. Write down and organize the tasks you do. Don't skimp — capture just about everything, even if it seems like a mundane task. After all, neither you nor your boss may realize just how much work you actually do on a daily basis. This list will be vital for the next step.

Beyond just writing down the tasks themselves, think of, and note, the skills associated with them. If you have multiple tasks you have to balance at once, reflect on the project management skills needed to do so. If you always needed your boss's input when you started, but now can handle many requests on your own, that shows an increase in your skills and ownership over your work.

Put thought into this step, and don't sell yourself short.

Do comparative research

Now that you know the work you're doing, you need to prove that it merits more pay than you're currently receiving.

Look at other job postings online

Look at postings for similar positions as well as more senior versions of your current position. Compare the tasks to your self-audit list and see how the responsibilities line up. If your work requires more skills or you have more responsibility than comparable jobs, then that's a solid point in your favor.

Ideally, some of these job postings should include pay ranges, which will be helpful information to make your case. If your workload looks similar to higher-paying jobs posted, then you'll want to have this information. If you can't find pay information, look at sites like Glassdoor, Indeed, and LinkedIn to find average pay for similar positions in your area.

However, do keep in mind that pay can vary greatly. For example, a public sector position may pay less but come with better benefits. You likely can't ask for a 20,000 pay increase, but you can still use it as a talking point to negotiate a more realistic pay increase.

Research company pay and policies

If available, consider asking HR for your pay band and job description. This may not be available, depending on the size of the company. However, you could try to look at the original listing for your position if you still have it. If you applied through a job posting website, it may be saved to your account.

Look at the job description and compare your current workload. If you're covering all the responsibilities, and perhaps going above and beyond, then you can make the case for the higher end of the pay range. This is especially true if you have pay range data, but you can use your external research as a gauge for fair pay here as well.

Finally, some organizations may have caps on pay increases. For example, many governmental organizations cap pay raises at 10%.

Step 2: Outline your case

Now that you've done your research, you need to outline your case. What supporting documentation you want, is up to you. However, you should have a detailed outline for your own use when asking your boss for a raise. Additionally, you want some sort of document to leave with your boss. This will give them something to reference back.

Beyond that, there's a good chance they can't authorize a pay increase on their own. If they need to make the case to HR or upper management, they're likely to represent you better if you've laid the details out for them than if they must rely on memory alone. This could be a short 1-pager with highlights, or you could provide a full 2-3 page proposal. I would avoid anything longer than that, as it becomes unwieldy and they may be less likely to read it.

Introduction

Include an overview of your request in the introduction and that you'd like to discuss your role, responsibilities, and pay. You want to be to the point about the purpose of the conversation. Confidence is always key.

Your points of comparison

Highlight some of your research, whether it be internal or external. Note where your current work exceeds that of comparable positions and how it better matches higher paying jobs. Focus on how your work requires more skill and/or how you've taken on more ownership and responsibility.

Outline highlights of your performance

Support some of the most compelling pieces with examples. If you've gone from supporting projects to leading projects, talk about one. If you're the go-to person on certain issues, whereas the job description says you're expected to "support your supervisor" on issues, point out how. Stick to a few solid examples that will be memorable, not a whole laundry list where your greatest highlights will get lost.

Include the request

I recommend saving the actual ask for the end. Bringing up numbers in the beginning may frame their view of the conversation from the start. Instead, you want to make an irrefutable case before you bring numbers into it. However, you need to know exactly what your ask is before you have the conversation. Otherwise, your boss might consider \$1,000 a reasonable increase, when you were hoping for \$5,000 — leaving you unsatisfied even if you technically get what you asked for.

At this point, you should have a better idea of what a reasonable request is. It's unlikely that asking for a 20,000 pay increase will yield results, however you should ask for a little more than you hope for, leaving room for negotiation. For example, if you currently are paid \$50,000 a year and hope to make \$55,000, you likely shouldn't ask for \$65,000. Consider asking for \$56-58,000 instead. This leaves room to negotiate down to a number you're comfortable with.

It's important to be ambitious and defend the number you ask for, but also to be reasonable. Too high of an ask, and your request might be shut down from the start.

Step 3: Preparing for the conversation

How to approach a conversation about salary negotiation will vary based on your organization, relationship with your supervisor, and other factors. However, there are some general best practices to keep in mind.

Try to communicate face-to-face

Email isn't ideal for any complex conversation, it's hard to read tone and convey details. Choose the most personal communication option available to you, whether that be a meeting, video chat, or phone call.

Don't ambush your boss

Asking your boss for a raise will likely be a lengthy conversation. So, it's probably not best to stop by and ask for a moment to chat out of the blue. Instead, consider bringing it up during a regularly scheduled 1-on-1 check-in or setting a separate meeting. If you're doing it during a normal meeting, make sure you have enough time left on the agenda, consider extending the meeting slightly if needed. If you set a separate meeting, don't be too vague about it. Tell them that you'd like to discuss your position and responsibilities, you don't have to tell them you want to ask for a pay raise.

Practice what you want to say

You want to be concise and confident, not rambling. Use an outline that highlights the key points and practice what you're going to say a few times. Ideally, do this out loud. You'll be able to work through your key points and identify anything that sounded good in your head, but didn't quite come out right.

Prepare your supporting documents

Print out your outline and reference documents. You may want to bring the job descriptions and pay scales you pulled, your work audit, and any other reference documents. You don't necessarily need to provide your boss with a copy of each item, but you should keep them for reference in case they're needed in the conversation.

Do print out whatever documents you want to provide your boss with, whether it's just a page of the conversation highlights or a slightly longer proposal with more detail. Having something to share shows you're prepared and have done your homework.

Step 4: Ask your boss for a raise

Consider your tone

You don't want to sound threatening or demanding. Implying that if you don't get a raise that you're likely to look elsewhere isn't a good way to start the conversation. However, you do want to be confident and firm. You're not asking if you deserve more pay, you've decided that you do. Instead, you're asking if the company is willing to give you more pay for your work.

Avoid vague or hesitant language. In difficult conversations, some people tend to shrink back, using vague phrases or not wishing to talk up their credentials as much. While it may be counter to your instinct or upbringing, remember that standing up for yourself and being confident isn't the same as boasting. Here's one example of how to change your language to sound confident.

If you're hesitant, you may say something like "I've been thinking about it, and while I know it may not be possible, I feel like I deserve more money for the work I do." However, you don't just feel like you deserve more pay, you've decided you do deserve more pay.

Instead, consider something like this. “Upon evaluating my workload, and that of comparable positions, it’s clear that the work I’m currently doing is more in line with higher paying positions. Because of that, I’d like to discuss my current workload, salary, and what options are available.”

Ask for the next steps

Don’t just end the conversation with vague next steps. Thank your boss for the discussion, then ask what the next steps are and if they need anything else from you while they consider your case. Ask what their next steps are and what a timeline might look like.

If you leave the conversation with a vague “I’ll consider it and get back to you” it leaves too much room for delay and creates an awkward position where you may need to keep checking in. Having a clear-cut next step helps you gauge when you can expect to know more.

Step 5: What to do after you ask your boss for a raise

It may take some time before you have a definitive answer, in many organizations several levels of approval are needed. Still, while you don’t want to push the topic to the point of frustrating your supervisor, keep it on their mind. Consider keeping it as an item on your weekly check-in. If a set date comes and goes without hearing back, it’s ok to check in and ask if they’ve made any progress.

Prepare to hear “no”

This is, of course, a possibility. Perhaps it’s not in the budget, not a good time, or they don’t agree with your evaluation. Either way, you need to be prepared for this and determine what you wish to do after. For some, this may be a cue that it’s time to move on, but if you’re otherwise happy with your job, use it as an opportunity to ask questions.

For example, if it’s not in the budget, ask if it could be considered in next year’s budget. If your boss doesn’t feel that a pay increase is warranted for your work, ask what you’d need to do in your job to justify a future pay increase. Either way, ask for an explanation, and don’t be shy about opportunities for a pay raise in the future.

Additional Resource: [5 Steps for successfully negotiating pay after a job offer.](#)