

How to ask for A RAISE



SO YOU THINK YOU DESERVE A RAISE.

Chances are, your boss hasn't voluntarily showered you with bonuses or even offered you more than the annual cost-of-living raise, if even that. So it's up to you to make the first move. Here is some advice from eHow.com:

First, make sure you deserve a salary increase. Make a list of what you've done; what are your recent achievements? Write them down. Read them and think about what you did to create positive change or avert disaster. If you can't think of any good examples, you probably shouldn't be requesting a raise.

Once you have a list to work with, your next step is to figure out a successful strategy for delivery. Having the goods only gets you part of the way; timing and delivery will either seal the deal or not. Devising a strategy is all about research and preparation. You should know what the salary standard is for your industry, what objections the boss might raise, and how to deliver your pitch without backing down too soon.

Figure out exactly what you want. You also must consider what other options exist besides a one-time raise. This will help you when bargaining time comes. Compensation is not just limited to money: Perks can be great, too. You might want to think about more vacation time, tuition, getting a company-paid cell phone or

more flexible work hours.

You also should know what your company's raise policy is. Are raises merit-based? Are they fixed cost-of-living raises that everyone gets? Is there a percentage range depending on performance? That way, you can have a more productive discussion once the issue is on the table.

Predict your boss' objections. If the boss says the company does not have money in the budget at the present time, ask when you might see the raise you hoped for. Or you can ask for feedback on what you need to do to get the raise you want and get a schedule of goals in writing so you both can remember what you agreed on. If the boss offers a completely different compensation package than you had thought of (and it might be a better one) ask to be allowed to sleep on it before agreeing. If it's unfamiliar to you, the plan may have a drawback you haven't noticed.

If the boss delivers an outright "No!" for an answer, you don't have to take it lying down. Naturally, this is not the answer you want to hear, but

there are ways of dealing with it. Try your spectrum of compensation options, ask for feedback and finally convey your sense of dismay about the answer. You can always tell your boss you would like to take this discussion to the next level and target someone higher on the chain of command that might agree with you and overrule your immediate supervisor. But be prepared to raise some hackles if you take this approach; it is essential you do it openly and not behind your boss' back. Your boss will eventually find out anyway.

There are several conditions to consider when weighing your options. One is how far off the annual review is. If it is several months away, you might want to strike when you have recently had a stunning success. That way, your achievement won't lose its luster, and the boss can't claim amnesia when you bring it up a year from now. If you decide to have the raise discussion when your boss is not expecting it, or if your company does not have regularly scheduled formal reviews, let her know you want to set aside time to sit down and talk about your

performance and compensation.

Another opportune time to ask is when you have been handed more responsibility in your job or a new position entirely. While it would seem that more money is a natural consequence, you sometimes have to bring it up yourself. Yet another time to request a raise is when you notice that your job responsibilities have gradually morphed into a beast of burden but your paycheck has somehow been left behind.

On the other hand, if your review is coming up, it could be the perfect moment, since you and your boss will be on the topic anyway. Furthermore, you will have some time to get some good deeds under your belt and build your case.

It is also essential to be sensitive to external pressures, such as the overall economy and how your employer is doing financially. If the economy is in a major recession or your employer is struggling to stay in the black, it is clearly not an appropriate time to demand a raise, no matter how darn good you are. Bide your time, and hopefully the company will recognize your efforts later. ■