

Salary Negotiation Phrases for Developers

English phrases and counter-offer scripts for tech salary negotiation.

<https://coderslingo.com/resources/cheatsheets/salary-negotiation/>

Opening the conversation

Set a collaborative tone. You are not making demands — you are starting a discussion.

- **Thank you for the offer — I'm genuinely excited about the role and the team.**
Always anchor on enthusiasm before talking numbers.
- **Before I sign, I'd like to discuss the compensation to make sure it works for both of us.**
- **I'd love to walk through the total package together — base, bonus, and equity.**
- **Could we set aside a few minutes to talk through the offer details?**
- **I want to be transparent about my expectations so we can find a fit that works.**

Stating your expectations

Give a number or a range with confidence. A range signals flexibility; a single number signals certainty.

- **Based on my experience and the scope of this role, I was targeting a base in the range of [X] to [Y].**
- **My expectation for a role at this level is around [X].**
- **Given the responsibilities we discussed, I'm looking for something in the [X]–[Y] range.**
- **I'd be comfortable accepting at [X], which reflects the market for this position.**
- **To be upfront, [X] is the figure that would make this an easy yes for me.**

Countering an offer

Justify with data, not emotion. Reference market research, your impact, or competing offers.

- **Thank you — I appreciate the offer. Based on my research, the market range for this role is [X] to [Y].**
Cite a source: levels.fyi, Glassdoor, a recruiter, or peers.
- **I was hoping we could get the base closer to [X]. Is there flexibility there?**
- **The offer is a little below what I expected for this level. Could we revisit the base?**
- **I'm very keen to join. If we can bridge the gap to [X], I'm ready to sign today.**
- **Is [X] the top of the band for this level, or is there room to move?**
- **What would it take to get to [X]?**
A great open question — it puts the problem-solving on their side.

Leveraging a competing offer

Be honest. Never bluff about an offer you do not have — it is easy to call.

- **I want to be transparent: I have another offer at [X], but your team is my first choice.**
- **I'm weighing a competing offer. Is there room to make the numbers more comparable?**
- **Your role is my preference, but the gap with my other offer is significant. Can we close it?**
- **I'd rather join you. If you can match [X], I'll decline the other offer this week.**

Negotiating beyond base salary

If base is capped, the total package usually isn't. Trade across levers.

- **If the base is fixed, could we look at a signing bonus to bridge the difference?**
- **Would you consider additional equity, or accelerating the vesting schedule?**
- **I'd value extra PTO — could we add a few days to the standard allowance?**
- **Is fully remote (or three days remote) an option for this role?**

- Could we agree to a salary review at six months instead of the standard twelve?
- Would the company cover a relocation allowance or a home-office budget?
- Could we put a guaranteed first-year bonus in writing?

Accepting or declining gracefully

- **This works for me — I'm delighted to accept. Could you send the updated offer in writing?**
Always get the final number in writing before celebrating.
- **Thank you for working with me on this. I'm excited to get started.**
- **I've thought it over carefully, and I've decided to pursue another opportunity. I'm grateful for your time and the offer.**
- **It's a difficult decision, but I'm going to decline. I'd love to stay in touch for the future.**

Counter-offer scripts

Script 1 — Counter-offer email (market data)

Subject: Re: Offer for [Senior Backend Engineer]

Hi [Name],

Thank you so much for the offer — I'm genuinely excited about the team and the work on [project/product].

I've reviewed the package carefully. Based on my research for senior backend roles in [city/market] and the scope we discussed, I was targeting a base in the range of [X]–[Y]. The current offer of [Z] sits a little below that band.

Would there be flexibility to bring the base closer to [X]? If we can get there, I'm ready to sign right away.

Thanks again — I'm looking forward to joining.

Best,
[Your name]

Script 2 — Trading across the package

Subject: Re: Offer — a couple of questions

Hi [Name],

Thank you for the offer. I'm keen to accept and want to find a structure that works for both of us.

I understand the base may be near the top of the band. If that's the case, could we look at one of the following?

- A signing bonus of [X] to offset the gap, or
- Additional equity / accelerated vesting, or
- A salary review at six months.

Any one of these would make this an easy yes. Happy to jump on a quick call if that's easier.

Best,
[Your name]

Script 3 — Spoken counter (phone / call)

"Thank you — I really appreciate the offer, and I want you to know this is my first choice.

I've done some research, and for this level the market range looks like [X] to [Y]. The current base is at the lower end of that. Is there any room to move the base toward [X]?"

I'm not trying to squeeze – I just want the number to reflect the role so I can commit fully. What would it take to get there?"

