Executive Empress

THE COMPENSATION PLAYBOOK

How to Ask for a Raise

A step-by-step guide to knowing your worth, making your case, and having the conversation with confidence

Introduction

Most people don't get the raise they deserve, and it’s not because they aren't valuable, but because they never ask, or they ask without a plan.

Almost every raise I got - many in my career from Teacher to CXO of a company - is because I asked. And before I asked, I proved myself.

This guide walks you through exactly what to do before, during, and after the conversation, so you can approach it with clarity instead of anxiety.

Before you move to Step 1...
Be prepared for the answer to be no. This guide will help you know your value, make a strong case, and advocate for yourself confidently, but even a strong case is no guarantee.

Prepare for that possibility so you can stay professional, ask the right questions, and decide what the answer means for your next move. **A no is information. Use it.**

Step 1: Know Your Market Rate

Before you ask for anything, find out what you're actually worth.

- Check sites like Glassdoor, Levels.fyi, LinkedIn Salary, or Payscale for your role, industry, and location.
- Talk to peers in similar roles (many people are more open about pay than you'd think).
- Note the range. You'll want a number, not a guess

Worksheet prompt:

My role: ____

Market range I found: ______________________________

Target number: _____________________________________

Tip: Aim for a range, not a single number. That gives you room to negotiate

Step 2: Build Your Case

Managers approve raises based on impact, not tenure. List concrete wins:

- Projects you led or delivered
- Revenue generated, costs saved, or time saved
- Extra responsibilities you've taken on since your last review
- Positive feedback from clients, peers, or leadership

Worksheet prompt:

My top 3 achievements this year:

1. ____
2. ____
3. ____

Step 3: Choose Your Moment

Timing affects your odds. Good windows:

- Right after a big win or successful project
- During performance review season
- When the company is doing well financially
- Before budgets get locked for the next quarter/year

Timing Tips:

1. Avoid the danger zones.

Skip layoffs, rounds of budget cuts, or right after a rough quarter. Even a strong case can get lost in a stressed budget.

2. Ride the momentum.

Ask within 1–2 weeks of a big win, not months later. Impact is freshest (and most persuasive) right after it happens.

3. Read the room, not just the calendar.

A "good" time on paper (like review season) can still be a bad moment if your manager is visibly overwhelmed. A quick "is now a good time?" check-in goes a long way.

Step 4: The Conversation

Open with a direct, confident ask:

"I'd like to talk about my compensation. Based on my contributions this year — [specific examples] — and market research for this role, I'm asking for a raise to $__________."

If they ask you to justify it:

"Over the past [timeframe], I've [specific achievement], which resulted in [impact]. I've also researched comparable roles, and the market range is ________– ________."

If they push back on timing:

"I understand budget is a factor. Can we set a specific date to revisit this, and what would you need to see from me to make it happen?"

Remember:

Be prepared for “no”:"

Step 5: Hande Pushback

"We don't have budget right now."
→ "I understand. Can we agree on a timeline to revisit this, and are there other options - a bonus, extra PTO, or a title change - we could consider in the meantime?"

"Let me think about it."
→ "Of course. Can we set a follow-up date so we can keep the conversation moving?"

"I'll need to check with leadership."
→ "That makes sense. When would be a good time to follow up?"

Tip: Aim to leave the room with a solid follow up set.

Step 6: Follow Up

1. Send a brief email recap after the conversation (this creates a paper trail and shows professionalism)
2. If they said yes: confirm details in writing
3. If they said not now: confirm the follow-up date and what's expected of you before then

Tip: Don’t get timid after you make the ask. Follow up confidently and close the loop.

Quick Reference Checklist

- ☐ Researched market rate
- ☐ Documented 3+ achievements
- ☐ Picked a strategic time
- ☐ Practiced my opening line
- ☐ Prepared for pushback
- ☐ Sent follow-up email

Closing

Remember, asking for a raise is absolutely not confrontational. It's a normal part of managing your career.

So many people wait for their leader to recognize them. Stop waiting and start taking forward steps to being your own advocate.

The worst outcome is usually "not yet," not "no." Prepare well, ask clearly, and follow up.

But you’ll never know until you ask. Become a self-advocate and see what can happen.