

# SALARY NEGOTIATION SCRIPT & FRAMEWORK

Weizhen Recruiters - Conversation Templates

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Use these scripts during salary negotiations. Customize numbers/roles for your situation. Practice beforehand so you stay calm and on-track. Remember: Negotiation is normal; both sides should feel good about final number.

## SCENARIO 1: CANDIDATE ASKS FOR MORE THAN BUDGET

**Setup:** Your budget: RM 100K | Candidate asks for: RM 120K | You need to: Find middle ground without going over budget

### CONVERSATION SCRIPT:

#### YOU:

*"Thanks for that. RM 120K. Before I respond, help me understand your thinking. What's the basis for that number? Is that based on previous salary, market research, or something else?"*

#### CANDIDATE:

*[explains their reasoning]*

#### YOU:

*"Got it, I appreciate the transparency. Let me be equally transparent with you. Here's where we are: Our budget for this role is RM 100K. That's based on market rates for your experience level in Kuala Lumpur. Our range is RM 95K-130K depending on experience. Your experience puts you in the RM 95K-110K range. I see you more at RM 100K-105K range."*

*"Now, I also understand you're looking for RM 120K. That's 20% more than our budget. I want to make this work. Let me propose some options:"*

- **Option A:** Base RM 105K (we go up 5K) + 20% bonus (RM 21K if you hit targets). Total at-risk: RM 126K if you perform.
- **Option B:** Base RM 100K + RM 10K signing bonus (one-time) + 25% bonus target (RM 25K). Total potential: RM 135K if you perform.
- **Option C:** Base RM 100K + RM 5K signing bonus + extra professional development budget (RM 5K/year). Plus clear pathway: 6-month review for raise to RM 110K if you hit impact targets.
- **Option D:** We split the difference. Base RM 110K (you come down from 120, we come up from 100). No bonus this year (to offset the higher base). Revisit in 6 months.

*"Which of these feels like it could work for you?"*

### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- ✓ Acknowledge their ask (validate it's reasonable to ask)
- ✓ Be transparent about your constraints (budget, market data)
- ✓ Show multiple options (gives them sense of control)
- ✓ Frame options as "total comp" not just base (bonus + equity + benefits)
- ✓ Connect to performance (tying upside to results)
- ✓ Get to yes-or-no (don't let negotiation drag)

## SCENARIO 2: CANDIDATE ASKS FOR LESS THAN BUDGET

**Setup:** Your budget: RM 120K | Candidate asks for: RM 100K | You need to: Pay them fairly (underpaying risks early exit)

### CONVERSATION SCRIPT:

#### YOU:

*"Thanks for that number. RM 100K. Actually, I want to push back a bit. [Pause. Don't rush.]"*

*"Here's why: Based on your experience and the market data I'm seeing, the range for this role is RM 100K-140K. Your 5 years of relevant experience puts you at RM 110K-125K range."*

*"I don't want you to undersell yourself. That creates two risks for us: 1) You might resent the salary in 6 months and leave, 2) You might carry resentment into the job."*

*"So I'd like to propose: We start you at RM 115K instead. That's fair for your experience, market-rate in Kuala Lumpur, and sets you up for raises as you grow. Does RM 115K feel right to you?"*

### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- ✓ Don't let good candidates undersell (they'll leave unhappy)
- ✓ Frame it as mutual benefit (protecting the relationship)
- ✓ Offer more to reduce future resentment
- ✓ Direct conversation ("I'd like us to start higher")

## SCENARIO 3: CANDIDATE HAS COMPETING OFFER

**Setup:** Candidate says: "I have an offer from [Company] for RM 150K. Your offer is RM 120K. I prefer your company, but I can't leave RM 30K on the table."

### CONVERSATION SCRIPT:

#### YOU:

*"I understand. That's a significant difference. Let me ask you some questions: 1) Does their role feel like the right opportunity for you? 2) What appeals to you about [our company] vs. theirs? 3) Beyond salary, what matters in your next role?"*

[Listen carefully. If they prefer you but only for salary, you've got a problem.]

*"Here's what I can do: I can come up to RM 130K (10K increase from our offer), add RM 5K signing bonus, equity: 0.1% (if we're a startup), professional development budget: RM 5K/year, plus full remote flexibility (if they value that)."*

*"Total package: RM 130K base + RM 5K sign-on + equity/benefits = competitive with their RM 150K. Now, the difference is: which opportunity excites you more? Their offer + RM 30K extra, or our opportunity + RM 10K less? That's the real choice."*

### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- ✓ Understand what's really driving them (might not be just salary)
- ✓ Match on total comp, not just base
- ✓ Highlight non-salary benefits that differentiate you
- ✓ Ask them to choose (opportunity vs. money)
- ✓ If they choose money: let them go (wrong hire anyway)

## SCENARIO 4: THEY ACCEPT, THEN ASK FOR MORE LATER

**Setup:** Offer made: RM 100K | Candidate said: "Perfect, when do I start?" | Two weeks before start: Candidate reaches out: "I got another offer. Can you increase to RM 120K?"

### CONVERSATION SCRIPT:

#### YOU:

[Deep breath. Don't be angry. This is negotiation, not betrayal.]

*"I appreciate you being direct about this. I also understand you got a competing offer. Here's where I'm at: We agreed on RM 100K. That was our number based on the market and your experience. I can't change that now without setting a bad precedent internally."*

*"However, I also want this to work. So here's what I can do:"*

- **Option A:** We stick with RM 100K, but I'll commit to a 6-month review for a raise to RM 110K if you hit your impact targets.
- **Option B:** We go with the RM 100K offer, and we revisit the signing bonus conversation. Maybe there's a RM 5K-10K signing bonus that helps bridge the gap.
- **Option C:** I need to be honest - if the salary is the deciding factor, maybe their offer is better for you. That's okay. Better to know now than have regret later.

*"What feels right to you?"*

### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- ✓ Don't get angry (negotiation is normal)
- ✓ Be clear on what you agreed (don't gaslight them)
- ✓ Show flexibility on secondary levers (bonus, timing, review)
- ✓ Be willing to lose them (bad precedent otherwise)
- ✓ Stay professional (burning bridges costs you later)

## SCENARIO 5: NEGOTIATING WITH EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE

**Setup:** VP role, salary component is lower % | More emphasis on equity, perks, title, authority | Different negotiation approach required

### WHAT MATTERS TO EXECUTIVES:

- **EQUITY:** What % and vesting? If sub-0.5%, base needs to be higher. If 0.75%+, base can be lower.
- **AUTHORITY:** P&L; accountability? That's worth more than just a title.
- **BOARD SEAT:** Board seat or observer? Valuable for network and involvement.
- **REPORTING:** Direct to CEO? Valuable for influence and career capital.
- **TEAM SIZE:** Budget to build team immediately? Career capital and option value.

### KEY PRINCIPLES:

- ✓ Executive negotiations are about total value, not just salary
- ✓ Equity and authority matter more than base
- ✓ Tie compensation to their actual value-add
- ✓ Get creative (board seat, title, budget authority)
- ✓ Show them you understand executive-level concerns

## HANDLING OBJECTIONS

### Objection: "Your offer is below market"

Response: "I understand. Let me share my market data. I'm using [source: Glassdoor, PayScale, LinkedIn]. Here's what I'm seeing for your experience level in KL: [RM X - RM Y range]. Our offer is in that range. Can you share your data source so I can understand the gap?"

### Objection: "I have another offer for more"

Response: "I respect that. My question: What appeals to you about this role vs. theirs? If it's just salary, their offer might be better. If it's opportunity, let's find a way to make the comp work."

### Objection: "I need RM X to match my current salary"

Response: "I hear that. Many candidates want to keep their current salary. But if you're changing roles/companies, sometimes the market is lower. Let me share the market data [show data]. Where do you see yourself in this range?"

### Objection: "Your benefits don't match theirs"

Response: "Good point. Let me compare specific benefits [health, leave, flexibility]. What benefits matter most to you? Maybe we can adjust our package to match."

### Objection: "I want to think about it"

Response: "Of course. That's smart to sleep on it. When would you like to reconnect? [Set specific time]. And while you're thinking, any questions I can answer for you?"

## DO's & DON'Ts

✓ DO	✗ DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be transparent about your budget and constraints</li><li>• Show market data (Glassdoor, LinkedIn, PayScale)</li><li>• Offer multiple options (gives them control)</li><li>• Frame total comp (base + bonus + equity + benefits)</li><li>• Connect to performance (tying upside to results)</li><li>• Listen more than you talk</li><li>• Respect their time (don't drag negotiation)</li><li>• Follow up in writing (confirm what you agreed)</li><li>• Stay professional</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Start with your lowest number (no room to move)</li><li>• Promise things you can't deliver (lying kills trust)</li><li>• Bad-mouth the competing offer</li><li>• Rush them ("You need to decide today")</li><li>• Get emotional ("We're insulted by your ask")</li><li>• Negotiate via email (too many misunderstandings)</li><li>• Agree and then change your mind (breaks trust)</li><li>• Tell them about other candidates' salaries</li><li>• Lowball them intentionally (they'll resent it later)</li></ul>

## NEGOTIATION TIMELINE

Stage	What to Say	Purpose
BEFORE INTERVIEW	"What's the salary range?" → "RM 95K-130K based on experience. Tell me your expectations only."	Get expectations early
AFTER 1ST INTERVIEW	"Assuming this moves forward, would a range of RM 100K-120K work for you?"	File out big mismatches
AFTER FINAL INTERVIEW	"If we move forward, we're thinking RM 110K. Does that feel in the ballpark?"	Minimize surprise when offer comes
OFFER STAGE	"We'd like to offer RM 110K base, 20% bonus, with the following benefits. For what conversation?"	Final offer
NEGOTIATION	Use scripts above. Aim to close within 2-3 rounds.	Either agree or agree to disagree
FINAL CONFIRMATION	Send offer letter with all details. Get signature before they resign from current job.	Lock in agreement

## SAMPLE OFFER LETTER (Email Format)

**Subject:** Offer - [Role Title] - [Candidate Name] Hi [Name], We're excited to extend an offer for the **[Role Title]** position.  
**POSITION:** [Role Title] **REPORTS TO:** [Manager Name] **START DATE:** [Date] **COMPENSATION:** • Base Salary: RM [X] • Annual Bonus: [X%] target (tied to [specific goals]) • Equity: [X%] (4-year vest, 1-year cliff) [if applicable] **BENEFITS:** • Health Insurance: [Details] • Annual Leave: 20 days • Professional Development: RM 3K/year • Flexible Arrangements: [Details] Please confirm by [Date]. Once you sign, we'll coordinate start date logistics, equipment setup, background check, and welcome kit. Excited to have you on the team. [Your name]

## FINAL TIPS

### 1. ANCHOR EARLY

First number in negotiation sets the frame. Don't lowball hoping they'll accept—they'll counter and you'll negotiate down. Start with your real number.

### 2. EXPLAIN YOUR REASONING

"Here's why we offered RM 100K: [Market data] + [Your experience] + [Our constraints]" Candidates respect transparent logic.

### 3. BE WILLING TO WALK

If you can't meet their number and they won't budge, let them go. Bad hire costs more than losing this one person.

### 4. FOLLOW UP IN WRITING

"We agreed on: Base RM 105K, 20% bonus, equity TBD in next offer conversation. Confirming this is correct?" [Get written confirmation]

### 5. STAY FRIENDLY

Even if negotiation is tense, stay professional. You want them to want to work for you, not feel like you fought them.

### 6. REMEMBER: THEY'RE EVALUATING YOU TOO

How you negotiate reveals your character. Be fair, transparent, and respectful. That's what they'll expect from the company.

**Questions? Need Help?** Contact: <https://weizhen.org/contact>

We can help you: Benchmark salaries for your roles • Prepare negotiation strategy • Role-play difficult conversations • Build offer letter templates

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