

Denice's Homeowner News™

Courtesy of Denice S. Anderson ☞ Watson Realty Corp. ☞ (904) 607-5091

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How to Get the Raise You Deserve

You've been working like a locomotive helping your company increase its bottom line; your co-workers depend on you, your customers love you, and you even saved your boss' bacon a few times. Yet, the Man Who Signs The Check hasn't noticed. You are starting to realize that, unless you stand up for yourself and demand a raise, you will be stuck making the same money for all eternity. Now, I know that approaching the boss about money is high on the discomfort scale for many people. But unless you do it, no one will do it for you. Here is how to conquer the jitters and get the raise you deserve.

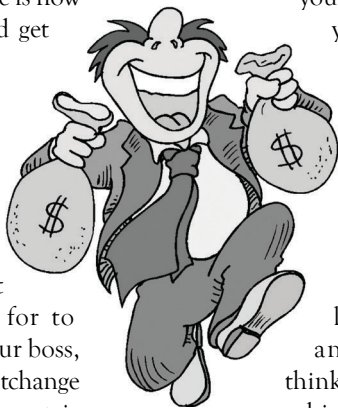
How Much

Your first step should be to do a bit of research and find out what a typical salary range is for your position. You don't want the raise you ask for to sound unreasonable to your boss, and you don't want to shortchange yourself either. The Internet is a good starting point, with web sites such as Salary.com offering pay surveys for a variety of jobs. You may also want to scan the classifieds both online and in the Sunday papers. And if you work for a big company, your HR department might be of help. They may be able to provide you with the company wide salary range for your position as well as any guidelines on how raise amounts are determined.

Why

Once you've determined how much of a raise to ask for, the next step is to come up with several good reasons why you

deserve it. Sit down and make a list of all your recent accomplishments and victories. The idea here is to be able to "help" your boss say yes by showing her how valuable you are to the company. Did you recently help the company land an important client? Have you suggested any cost-cutting measures, or helped negotiate lower prices with company's suppliers? Have you completed additional training that made you more productive at work, or have you made other employees more productive with your ideas or help? Are your customers raving about you? Be specific and show



your boss how you have gone beyond the call of duty to help your company prosper. And before you move on to the next step in your quest for a raise, run your list by someone you trust, like a spouse or a colleague and ask them what they think. They may even bring up an achievement that you may have forgotten about.

When

With asking for a raise, like with many things in life, your success (or failure) will be greatly influenced by your timing. The best time to approach your boss is right after you've had a big accomplishment while it's still fresh in your boss' mind. Another possibility is to do it a couple of months before your annual performance review, before your raise is already set without your input. Be mindful of your company's fortunes however—if there was

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Five Questions About Inspections

It is a normal part of the home buying process, but the inspection is one of those things that first time homebuyers are particularly curious about. Here are the five most common questions that I get, along with the answers.

Do I have to get an inspection?

No, an inspection is not required by any law. However, who wants to buy a house that hasn't been inspected? As the old expression goes, it's like buying a cat in a bag. How do you know what kind of cat it is? Is it friendly? Is it sick? Does it have all of its limbs? Is it a cat at all??? Unless you peek inside the bag, you just don't know. Same goes for buying a house. A professional inspection allows you to "peek" inside the home's various systems to make sure that everything is in good condition, so that you don't have unpleasant surprises later.



Can't I just do it myself?

A typical inspector inspects about 200 homes per year, has professional training, and carries errors and omissions insurance. Unless you have all of the above, it's probably not a good idea to do it yourself.

What if a problem is found?

Even with brand new homes, an inspection will almost always reveal

something, usually minor. You can ask the seller to make the necessary repairs, which she may or may not agree to do, or you can negotiate. If the problem is major, or if there are simply too many issues, you can back out of the deal completely; provided that your agent put a contingency in the contract that allows you to do this without penalty (this is called the Inspection or Cost of Repair Contingency).

Does the inspection guarantee against future problems?

No. The purpose of the inspection is to check the present state of the home and its systems. Stuff breaks, and not even the most experienced inspector can predict when it will break. However, various home warranties are available that can insure you against certain future problems, and these warranties are pretty affordable. Ask your favorite Realtor for a recommendation.

How much does an inspection cost?

The cost depends on the size of the house, its age, and the inspector. Typically you can expect to pay between \$300 and \$500, which is about \$49,700 to \$49,500 less than the cost of repairing a damaged foundation.

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a round of layoffs recently, or other bad news hitting your organization, the timing may not be right. If you feel that the time is good, try to catch your boss while he is in a good mood, and schedule a meeting with him to talk "about my performance and compensation." Don't just march into his office and "hit" him with your demands—do make an appointment, preferably in the afternoon when business slows down and when you will have enough time to talk.

How

You should treat this meeting as a mini interview. Before going in, organize your thoughts and maybe practice what you are going to say with your spouse or a friend. When you go in, be and look professional. As any good salesman will tell you, in order to make a good impression there is no substitute for a big smile, a firm handshake, and a clean pair of shoes. When speaking to your boss be confident and show that you absolutely, positively deserve and expect the raise. Share with her what you have accomplished and what you still plan to accomplish. Explain your value to the company (the accomplishment list now comes in handy), and demonstrate how the raise is not a loss for the company, but rather a reward and a motivator for a valuable employee. Don't be afraid to ask for a little more than you expect (in case your boss decides to "negotiate down"). Be firm, be prepared for your boss' "objections," and don't be afraid to disagree if you have facts that back up your position. Above all, remain professional, and don't get emotional.

There are, of course, a few no-nos. Don't say you need the money "because your husband just lost his job." Your needs don't justify a raise, only your accomplishments do. Don't bring up how much so-and-so at the next desks makes as bosses can get quite annoyed by that. And don't threaten to leave even if you plan to leave. Your boss will think of you as either a bluffer or a disloyal employee, neither of which will guarantee you a bright future at the company.

Don't Give Up

You may do such a great job at your meeting that your boss immediately says yes and gives you the raise on the spot.

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Free Special Report Available

The Seven Expensive Mistakes Buyers Frequently Make

is a three-page special report that no buyer should be without. If you are thinking of buying a home soon, arm yourself with the knowledge that can help you avoid expensive mistakes too many people have made. Request this report today – there is no cost or obligation.

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Joy is a Birdbath

Any bird-watching enthusiast will tell you that the best way to attract birds to your garden is to provide fresh, clean water. Birds love to take baths, especially in hot summer months, and finding a suitable place to do it can often be a challenge for them. Placing a birdbath (or two!) in your garden will invite many of them to visit you, giving the birds a place to splash about and giving you the joy of watching them up close.

Birdbaths can be purchased in garden stores, bird stores, or online. If you are handy, you can even make one yourself out of stuff you probably have sitting in your garage. Some creative ones I saw were made out of an old cake pan, a hubcap, a clay pot saucer and even a lid of a trashcan. Birds really don't care what the bath looks like (although your neighbors might) as long as the water is fresh and clean.

Your birdbath should be no more than 3 inches deep in the middle, and it should be shallower towards the edges. The varying depth will allow birds both large and small to enjoy your birdbath. If you already bought one that's too deep, submerge a couple of rocks in the middle to give smaller birds a place to stand on.

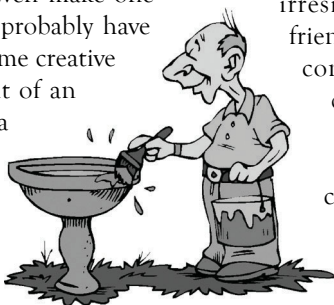
Ideally, your birdbath should be on a pedestal, about 3-4 feet off the ground.



Ground-level ones are nice, but the extra height of a pedestal gives birds a better view of the surroundings and

a chance to spot a predator.

It should not be located right next to a bush or another concealing object (where a cat can hide) and it should not be in a wide-open clearing either (where a hawk can easily spot the bathing birds). It is best to place it about 6-8 feet from a shrub or a small tree. In addition to providing a good place to hide should danger approach (wet birds don't fly too well), a nearby plant also gives birds a place to preen after a bath, something they always do. Just make sure that the plant likes water—drier plants can die if exposed to constant moisture.



To make your birdbath absolutely irresistible to your feathered friends, install a dripper. The constant plinking of water draws birds like a magnet as it sends a clear signal that the water is fresh and clean. Hummingbirds are especially drawn to dripping water as they bathe in flight! You'll

enjoy watching them hover around and time their fly-throughs so that they can catch a drop of water as it falls. And if you really want to delight them, install a mister. A fine spray of water shooting up in the air is a real magnet for the hummingbirds, and they will entertain you with their antics as they fly in and out of the mist. The dripper serves yet another purpose—it replenishes the bath as the water evaporates and is spilled by your tiny visitors.

Finally, don't forget to put yourself in the picture. Place your birdbath where you can see it from your house, then kick back and enjoy the show.

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Fantastic—thank her, and then start working even harder to show her that she made the right call. However, quite possibly you will get turned down on your first try. Don't despair—maybe there is no money in the budget for a raise, but you may be able to get something else, like time off, tuition reimbursement, flex time, stock options, or some other kind of perk. If no reward is forthcoming, express your disappointment, and ask your boss when you can revisit the subject again. Ask her what additional skills,

accomplishments or any other milestones need to be reached before you can start to earn more. It is possible that you may realize that there is no more room for advancement and that it is time to move on. But if your outlook at the company is positive, and your manager is willing to work with you, treat your first meeting as a beginning of an ongoing dialogue between you and your boss about your career. With patience, persistence and clear communication with your manager, you are bound to start climbing faster up the earnings ladder.



Q: What's the advantage of closing at the end of the month?

A: The main benefit is that one part of your closing costs, the prepaid interest, is lower. Suppose your closing is on June 15. Your first payment will be due on August 1, and it will include the interest accumulated from July 1 through July 31, but the lender won't forgive you the interest owed on the 15 days of June from the day of the closing until the end of the month. You will need to pay the interest for those 15 days upfront, at the time of the closing. Now, if the closing is on June 29, then there is only one day of interest to prepay, so consequently you need less cash to close.

This "savings" is really no savings at all—just a postponement of the payment. If you are getting a 30-year mortgage, you will still pay 30 years of interest regardless of when you close (provided you keep the house for 30 years). But if you are buying your first home or are strapped for cash, then setting the closing date for the end of the month might be a good idea.

Have a tough real estate question? Your calls and e-mails are always welcome:

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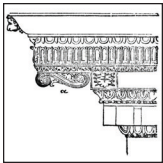


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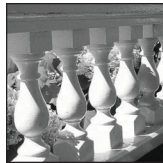
ARCHITECTURE CORNER

RUSTICATED LINTEL ON DORMER'S ROUNDEL? TRAVESTY!

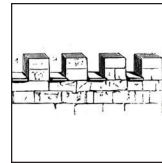
What better way to appear all cool and sophisticated at your next cocktail party than to impress those around you with your knowledge of architecture by using obscure architectural terms? Here are a few interesting ones to remember:



Cornice
Any crowning projection along the top of a wall



Baluster (or Banister)
A small pillar supporting a handrail (A row of balusters is called a balustrade.)



Parapet
A low wall at the edge of a terrace, battlement, roof, etc.



Balconet
A miniature balcony in front of a window providing decoration and safety



Portico
Entrance porch with a roof supported by columns



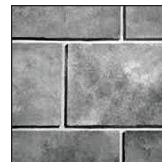
Lintel
Wood or stone beam across the top of a window or door, used for structural support



Dormer
A window protruding from the roof (These were usually windows of sleeping-rooms, hence the name.)



Roundel
A small round window



Rusticated
Cut blocks of masonry separated by deep joints, adding visual depth and texture to a wall