

G verb + object + infinitive or gerund

V compound adjectives

P intonation in polite requests

Help yourself

'A kleptomaniac is a person who helps himself because he can't help himself.'

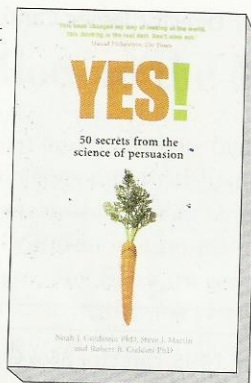
Henry Morgan, broadcaster

1 READING & SPEAKING

a What do you understand by the term 'self-help book'? Can you think of any which have been best-sellers in your country?

b Look at the cover of a recent self-help book, and read the review below. Answer the questions with a partner.

- 1 What is the situation described at the beginning of the article?
- 2 Why is it relevant?
- 3 Does the journalist think it is worth reading?



The persuaders

How can I jump a queue? A new book on the secret psychology of persuasion has the answer.

I was sitting in a car outside Marks & Spencer in Camden when I realized that Professor Robert Cialdini had completely changed my way of looking at the world.

There I was, waiting for my wife to emerge from the exit with some shopping. All the while I was watching a man selling copies of *The Big Issue* to people going into the shop's entrance. Or at least, trying to sell copies. He wasn't having much luck. People were sweeping past him.

Now the thing about the doors at M&S is that you can't go out of the 'in' doors. But then one lady shopper tried to do exactly that. And the *Big Issue* man was kind enough to push the door open from his side.

At that moment I knew what would happen next. Absolutely knew it. And it did. The lady shopper bought a copy of *The Big Issue*.

I'm sure that she didn't connect the door-opening and the magazine-buying, but connected they were. For reciprocity – our almost automatic instinct to return even quite small favours – is one of the main forms of social influence identified by the leading social psychologist, Robert Cialdini.

His idea – and it's not a bit of pop psychology, it's real academic work based on published papers and careful experimentation – is that we react almost unconsciously, in fairly predictable but sometimes fairly odd ways, to a range of social situations.

Marks & Spencer a British chain of department stores, often just called M&S

The Big Issue a magazine published on behalf of and sold by homeless people in the UK

pop psychology the use by ordinary people of simple or fashionable ideas from psychology in order to understand or explain people's feelings and emotional problems

c Work in pairs A and B. Each read a different extract from the book to find the following information.

What is the technique suggested?

What experiment(s) were done to prove that it worked?

d Tell your partner in your own words about the technique and the research.

A single word will help your persuasion.

Let's think about queuing. Whether you're at a bank, a supermarket, or an amusement park, queuing is probably not your idea of fun. Under what circumstances would you be willing to let another person jump the queue and move in front of you? Is it possible that just a single word from a requester could drastically increase the likelihood that you'd say, 'Yes, go ahead'?

Yes, and the word is *because*. Behavioural scientist Ellen Langer and her colleagues decided to put the persuasive power of this word to the test. In one study she arranged for a stranger to approach someone waiting to use a photocopier and ask, 'Excuse me. I just have five pages. May I use the machine?' In this situation, 60% of the people agreed to allow the stranger to go ahead of them. However, when the stranger followed the request with a reason ('because I'm in a rush') almost everyone (94% of the people) complied. Then Langer repeated the experiment. This time the stranger also used the word *because*, but followed it with a completely meaningless reason ('because I have to make copies'). Even with this meaningless reason, 93% agreed to let the stranger go first.

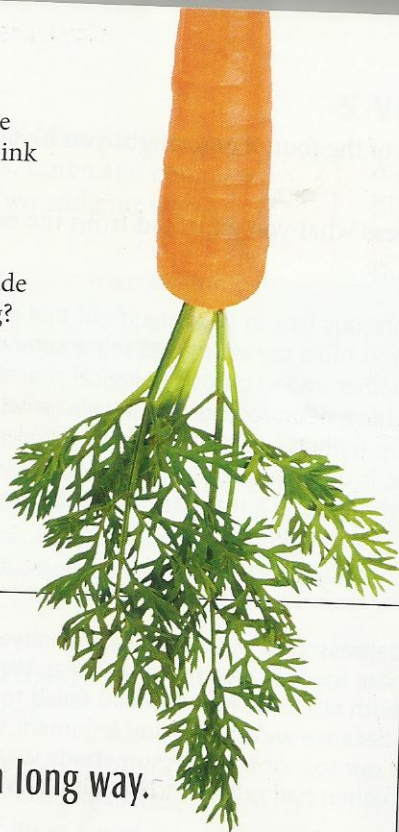
This study demonstrates the unique motivational influence of the word *because*.

Of course like most things, the power of *because* has its limits. In the previous study the request was small – five copies. Langer repeated the experiment, but told the person to ask to make 20 copies. This time, when the stranger did not use the word *because*, only 24% agreed, and when the meaningless reason was added, this produced no increase in compliance at all. However, when the request was made with a good reason, 50% of the people asked agreed.

These findings serve as a reminder to always be sure to accompany your request with a rationale, even when you think the reasons might be fairly clear. Too often we mistakenly assume that other people understand the reasons behind our requests. Rather than *telling your children to 'come to the table for dinner now' or 'go to bed immediately'*, a more effective strategy would be to provide a reason why you are asking them to take that action – and not just 'because I said so'.

e Discuss with a partner:

- What did you think of the two strategies? Do you think they would work on you?
- Do you think they would help you in situations where you need to persuade someone to do something?



B Asking for a little can go a long way.

Throughout this book we've attempted to provide evidence to support our claims that we can successfully and ethically move people to say yes. But in certain situations and environments it's also important to understand why people say no to reasonable requests, such as a request to donate to a legitimate charity.

Along with several colleagues, one of us set out to do just that. We thought that, when asked to make a donation, even those who would like to support the charity in some way say no, because they can't afford to donate very much, and they assume that the small amount that they can afford wouldn't do much to help the cause. Based on this reasoning, we thought that one way to urge people to donate in such a situation would be to inform them that even an extremely small sum would be helpful.

To test this hypothesis our research assistants went door to door to request donations for the American Cancer Society. After introducing themselves, they asked the residents, 'Would you be willing to help by giving a donation?' For half the residents the request ended there. For the other half, however, the research assistant added 'Even a penny will help'.

When we analysed the results we found that, consistent with our hypothesis, people in the 'even a penny will help' half of the sample were almost twice as likely to donate to the cause. And the amount the individuals gave was also found to be more or less the same in both halves, so the people in the 'even a penny' half did not donate less.

The study suggests that if you want somebody to do something for you, simply pointing out that even a small offering on their part would be acceptable is likely to be an effective strategy. Applications in the workplace might be, to a colleague regarding a joint project, 'Just an hour of your time would really help'; to a colleague whose handwriting is illegible, 'Just a little more clarity would help'. The chances are that this little step in the right direction won't prove so little after all.

2 GRAMMAR

verb + object + infinitive or gerund

a Right (✓) or wrong (✗)? With a partner, correct any mistakes in the highlighted phrases.

- 1 The man with *The Big Issue* was trying to persuade people to buy his magazine.
- 2 When I was a child I was often made do the washing up.
- 3 I want that you finish these exercises in five minutes.
- 4 I'll meet you there at 7.00 – and please don't keep me waiting!
- 5 Do you think you could let me have the reports before the end of the week?
- 6 I don't mind you not finish everything, but at least eat your vegetables!
- 7 I suggest you taking the 7.30 train – it'll be less stressful than trying to catch the earlier one.
- 8 We'd love you to come – please say you can!
- 9 My father recommended that we should go to the museum before lunch, when it's less crowded.
- 10 The job involves me to travel abroad at least twice a month.

b p.146 Grammar Bank 4B. Read the rules and do the exercises.

3 PRONUNCIATION

intonation in polite requests

a 4.5 Listen and write down six requests.

- 1 _____? It's a bit stuffy in here.
- 2 To Victoria Station. _____?
- 3 _____? I need someone to help me with this report.
- 4 If you're going to the canteen _____?
- 5 _____, and not this one?
- 6 _____? My car's being serviced.

b 4.6 Now listen to the same requests said twice. Which of the two do you think sounds the most polite? Why? How does the other one sound?

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 a b | 2 a b | 3 a b |
| 4 a b | 5 a b | 6 a b |

c 4.7 Listen to the polite requests again and repeat, copying the intonation.

d Think of something you would really like someone to do for you, e.g. give you a lift home, look after a pet for the weekend, lend you some money, go somewhere with you, etc. Ask other students, and see if you can find three people who are prepared to help you. Try to be as persuasive as possible. Remember the advice you read in the extract from *Yes!* and use polite intonation.

Yes, Minister

This is an extract from a famous BBC TV comedy programme, *Yes Minister*. Jim Hacker is a slightly intelligent government minister who always allows himself to be controlled by his civil servants. Here, Hacker is complaining to his private secretary about the paperwork he has to deal with.

- Jim Hacker** When am I going to get through all this correspondence?
- Bernard Woolley** You do realize, Minister, that you don't actually have to!
- Jim Hacker** Don't I?
- Bernard Woolley** Not if you don't want to, we can draft an official reply.
- Jim Hacker** What's an official reply?
- Bernard Woolley** It just says, 'The Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter' and we say something like 'The matter is under consideration', or, even if we feel so inclined, 'under active consideration'.
- Jim Hacker** What's the difference?
- Bernard Woolley** Well, 'under consideration' means we've lost the file, 'under active consideration' means we're trying to find it.

Script by Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay

private 'secretary' *noun* 1 a secretary whose job it is to deal with the more important and personal affairs of a business person 2 a civil servant who acts as an assistant to a senior government official



FIRST DATE She

I said I liked classical music.
It wasn't exactly a lie.
I hoped he would get the impression
That my brow was acceptably high.

I said I liked classical music.
I mentioned Vivaldi and Bach.
And he asked me along to this concert
And here we are sitting in the half-dark.

I was thrilled to be asked to the concert.
I couldn't decide what to wear.
I hope I look tastefully sexy.
I've done what I can with my hair.

Yes, I'm thrilled to be here at this concert.
I couldn't care less what they play
But I'm trying my hardest to listen
So I'll have something clever to say.

When I glance at his face it's a picture
Of rapt concentration. I see
He is totally into this music
And quite undistracted by me.

FIRST DATE He

She said she liked classical music.
I implied I was keen on it too.
Though I don't often go to a concert
It wasn't entirely untrue.

I looked for a suitable concert
And here we are, on our first date.
The traffic was dreadful this evening
And I arrived ten minutes late.

So we haven't had much time for talking
And I'm a bit nervous. I see
She is totally lost in the music
And quite undistracted by me.

In that dress she is very attractive –
The neckline can't fail to intrigue.
I mustn't appear too besotted.
Perhaps she is out of my league.

Where are we? I glance at my programme
But I've put my glasses away.
I'd better start paying attention
Or else I'll have nothing to say.

by Wendy Cope



Wendy Cope

'highbrow' *adj.* 1 (sometimes *disapproving*) concerned with or interested in serious artistic or cultural ideas
SYN INTELLECTUAL *highbrow* newspapers **OPP** LOWBROW

HUMOUR