



# INFLUENCE: Science & Practice

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## Overview

Influence is primarily about compliance – using psychology to increase the odds that someone will say yes to whatever you request. To effectively influence someone, you can make them believe you have similar personality traits as them, you can make them believe something is rare, or you can get them to say yes to a simpler request first, in order to trigger their desire to be consistent in their behavior. This book describes these techniques (as well as others) in detail, as well as valid defensive techniques to avoid being influenced.

*“There are some people who know very well where the weapons of automatic influence lie and how employ them regularly and expertly to get what they want.”*

## Introduction

*“Just what are the factors that cause one person to say yes to another person?”*

As an experimental psychologist, the author was curious which principles most influenced an individual’s decision to say yes to a request. The author discovered 6 psychological principles for compliance: (1) reciprocity, (2) consistency, (3) social proof, (4) liking, (5) authority, and (6) scarcity.

## Chapter 1. Weapons of Influence

Ethologists have found that in nature, animals tend to have fixed-action patterns; *“the behaviors comprising them occur in virtually the same fashion and in the same order every time.”* When a certain trigger goes off, an animal will automatically respond in a particular way. For example, if a mother turkey hears the cheep-cheep sound from her baby chick, she will care for it. If she doesn’t hear the sound, she will either neglect or kill it.

We may find it ridiculous that animals have these fixed-action patterns, yet we are no exception ourselves! In fact, automatic behavior is clearly observed in humans

as well. We act in a stereotyped manner because it is an efficient form of behaving. We regularly employ mental shortcuts in our everyday judgments – for example, if we’re told that an “expert” recommends a certain product, we automatically think it is legitimately good.

With all this being said, there are those who take advantage of our automatic responses. Profiteers exploit the contrast principle, which states that if we’re presented with an item slightly different from the first, we tend to see it as more different than it really is. Retail clothiers, for example, may present a customer with an expensive item first, followed by a less expensive one.

## Chapter 2. Reciprocation

*“A widely shared and strongly held feeling of future obligation made an enormous difference in human social evolution because it meant that one person could give something to another with confidence that the gift was not being lost.”*

The reciprocity rule states, *“we should try to repay, in kind, what another person has provided us”*; thus, we’re obligated to repay favors. This rule can be exploited by giving a gift before asking for a favor. This particular tactic is due to 3 reasons: (1) it overpowers the influence of other factors, (2) it enforces uninvited debts, and (3) it triggers unequal exchanges. This rule brings about mutual concession in 2 ways:

1. It pressures the recipient of an already-made concession to respond in kind.
2. It allows someone to make the initial concession to begin the beneficial process of exchange.

The rejection-then-retreat technique demonstrates the first way mutual concession is achieved through the reciprocity rule. This technique ensures that *“by starting with an extreme request that is sure to be rejected, a requester can then profitably retreat to a smaller request (one that was desired all along), which is likely to be accepted because it*

