

Negotiate like an expert

For every conversation where something is at stake. Salary,
contract, price, conflict.



90 %

of the outcome is strategy,
not arguments

5

tools you can
use right away

7

prep steps for
every conversation

Preparation & BATNA

Silence & mirroring

Tactical empathy

De-escalation

Body language

Cheatsheet & worksheet

You lose it before it starts

"We just can't pay you more right now." You're sitting across from your boss with ten arguments ready, and suddenly none of them feels any good. Silence. You nod. On the way home you think of everything you should have said.

That moment didn't start in the office. It started three weeks earlier, when you told yourself it would somehow work out. Most people lose a negotiation before they sit down at the table: they learn the numbers and the arguments, but the conversation actually turns on something else. On who leads it.

The key idea

A good negotiator doesn't persuade with arguments. They run the process: who asks the questions, who sets the pace, who can hold a silence. And whoever runs the process runs the outcome.

Why conflicts happen at all

Not because the other side is evil or stupid. Two people read the same situation through different filters: their upbringing, their experience, their fears. Your boss doesn't see your mortgage. You don't see the budget that just got cut under him.

The goal of negotiating

It isn't to be right. It's to understand why the other side sees things the way they do. Only then can the conversation move anywhere.

Negotiation isn't a duel. It's a dance: one person leads, the other follows.

What's on the pages ahead

01 · Preparation

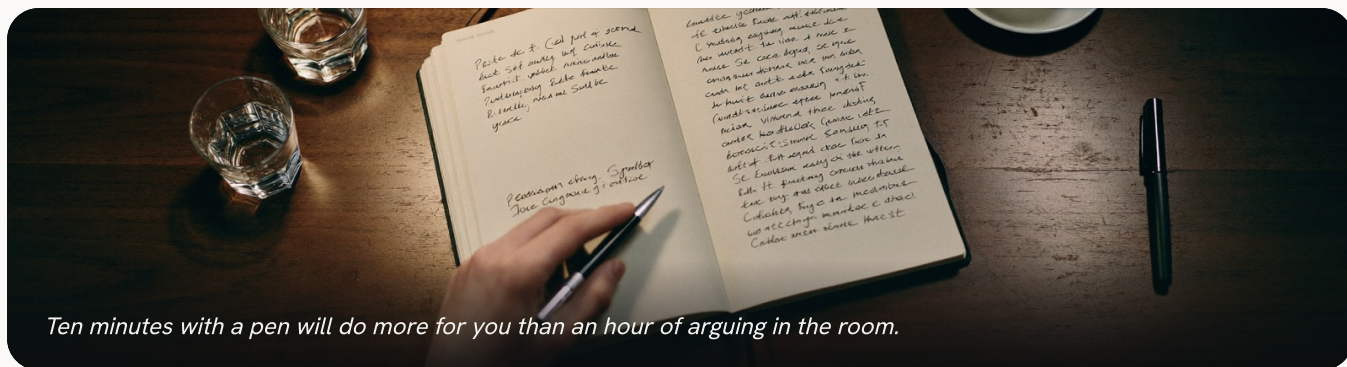
Seven questions and one table you can fill in within ten minutes.

02 · Five tools

Silence, listening, calibrated questions, empathy, role.

03 · To take with you

A cheatsheet and a worksheet to print and carry with you.



● PART 1 · PREPARATION

You win at your desk

Seven questions to answer in advance

#	QUESTION	WHAT TO WRITE DOWN
1	What do I want?	A concrete, measurable goal
2	What is my minimum?	I won't go below this
3	What is my maximum?	My ideal outcome
4	My WAP	Walk Away Position: when I leave the table
5	My BATNA	What I'll do if the deal falls through
6	Their position and BATNA	What they want and what they'll do without a deal
7	Shared interests	Where our interests meet

BATNA = Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement

Your best alternative if the deal falls through. Another offer in your pocket, another supplier, a plan B. The better your alternative, the calmer you sit. And the calm shows.

Know the other side

- What are their **real interests**, not just the positions they say out loud?
- What **pressure** are they under? What deadline is breathing down their neck?
- Who actually has the **authority to decide**?
- What are they **afraid of**? What would no deal cost them?

Five tools for the conversation

The strongest one costs nothing and takes no study. You just have to sit through it.

1

Silence

THE STRONGEST TOOL

After an important sentence, don't react right away. The silence works for you.

2-3 s

The brain processes what it heard.
Ideal after an important question.

3-4 s

Attention sharpens. Expectation
builds.

7-12 s

Discomfort. The other side starts
giving ground.

2

Active listening

BUILDS INFLUENCE

Hearing them isn't enough. They have to see you listening. Listening isn't weakness, it's how you gather data.

Paraphrasing

"So this is mostly about...?"

Mirroring

*Repeat their last 2-3 words back
as a question*

Labeling

"It looks like this frustrates you..."

A person who feels heard gives ground far more willingly.

Listening gathers data and builds influence at the same time.

Try it today

On your next phone call, ask a question and then hold three seconds of silence. Nothing more. Watch what the other side does with the space.

Tools 3 to 5

3 Calibrated questions

Open questions that can't be answered with a yes or a no. Whoever asks, leads.

How could we solve this?

What matters most to you here?

What led you to that? (not "why", it pushes people into defense)

4 Tactical empathy

A named emotion loses its power.

An ignored one grows.

"I can see I've upset you somehow..."

"It looks like this made you angry..."

"That probably came out worse than I meant..."

Tactical empathy isn't agreement. It's understanding. You can name what the other side feels even when you disagree.

5 Role + reason

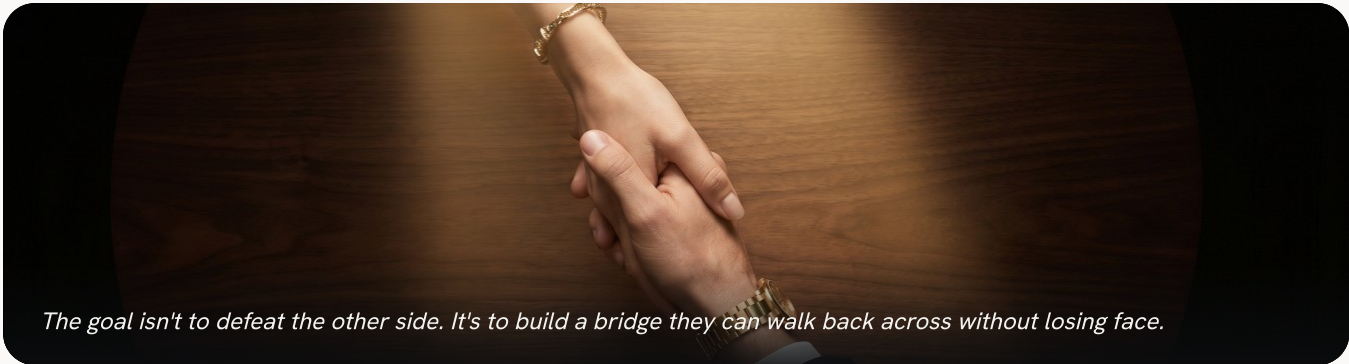
"As [role], I need [X] to make this work."

People want to know **why**. Even a simple reason makes them far more willing to go along.

"As the managing director, I need to see the quarterly numbers before I sign this."

Try it today

Replace one "why?" with "what led you to that?". You get the same information without the defensive reaction on the other side.



• PART 3

What not to do

DO THIS

- Look for a solution where both sides gain something
- Say calmly and directly what you want
- When emotions rise, pause

AVOID

- Compromise as your first move
- Defending and arguing
- Reacting emotionally under stress

"Compromise is a lousy outcome."

CHRIS VOSS, FORMER FBI NEGOTIATOR

• PART 4

When things heat up

1 Slow down

Pause and breathe. Your calm settles the other side too.

2 Name the emotion

"I can see this made you angry..." A named emotion loses its power.

3 Ask open questions

"What bothers you most about this?" Give them room.

4 Listen without interrupting

Let them finish, even when you disagree.

5 Come back to the topic only then

Substance makes sense only after the emotions have settled.

The body speaks first

You can script your words. Not your breathing. Watch these signals through the whole conversation:

SIGNAL	ONE POSSIBLE READING
Hidden hands	Lower trust, holding something back
Open palms	Openness, honesty
Feet pointing at the door	They want to leave, they're not comfortable
Leaning in	Interest, engagement
Leaning back	Distance, rejection
A change in speech or breathing rhythm	Something is going on inside

Always read body language in context and in change, never in isolation. Crossed arms don't have to mean resistance. The person might just be cold.

Play to win, not just not to lose

Every tool on the previous pages rests on one mindset. The difference looks like this:

PLAYING TO WIN

- You actively create value
- You build the relationship for years
- The other side leaves satisfied
- They come back to you

PLAYING NOT TO LOSE

- You defend and react
- You force a one-off win
- The other side feels beaten
- Next time they go to your competitors

Cheatsheet

Everything that matters on one page. Read it the morning before the meeting.

● PREPARATION (BEFORE THE MEETING)

- › Goal: concrete and measurable
- › Minimum, maximum and WAP
- › BATNA: your best alternative
- › Their position, BATNA and pressures
- › Shared interests

● OPENING

- › Put the fish on the table: name the topic openly
- › Be the first to propose an agenda
- › First impression: a smile, calm, humanity

● DURING THE CONVERSATION

- › After a price or an important moment, 7–12 s of silence
- › Paraphrase, mirror, label emotions
- › Questions: How? What? (never a hostile why)
- › "As [role], I need [X]"
- › Whoever asks the questions leads the conversation

● CLOSING

- › Sum up the deal out loud and check both sides understand it the same way
- › Agree on the next step and a date
- › End it so the other side wants to come back to you

● NEVER

- ✗ ~~Compromise as your first move~~
- ✗ ~~Defending and arguing~~
- ✗ ~~An emotional reaction (pause instead)~~
- ✗ ~~Rushing. Whoever hurries, loses.~~

Negotiation prep

Print this page and fill it in before every important conversation.

TOPIC / SITUATION

MY GOAL

MY MINIMUM

MY BATNA

What will I do if the deal falls through?

THEIR BATNA (MY GUESS)

What will they do without a deal?

THEIR REAL INTERESTS

MY STRATEGY

3 CALIBRATED QUESTIONS I WILL ASK

WALK AWAY POSITION: WHEN I LEAVE THE TABLE

Go deeper

This guide is the short version of books that would take you a month. Here are four worth the month.

CHRIS VOSS

Never Split the Difference

Tactical empathy, labeling, mirroring, calibrated questions. Written by a former FBI negotiator who bargained for hostages' lives. If you read one book on negotiation, make it this one.

ROGER FISHER & WILLIAM URY

Getting to Yes

Interests over positions, BATNA, mutual gain. The classic that defined modern negotiation.

WILLIAM URY

Getting Past No

How to negotiate with difficult people. Concrete situations of resistance and escalation.

ROBERT CIALDINI

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion

Six principles of influence: reciprocity, authority, social proof, commitment, liking, scarcity.

The whole guide in one sentence

A prepared, calm negotiator who can hold a silence, listen, and name the other side's emotions runs the process. And with it, the outcome.

If it helped you, send it to someone who needs it.