



# Unit 8

# Influencing and Persuasion Skills

## Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Discuss the steps involved in persuasion process.



## Unit 8

# Influencing and Persuasion Skills

### The Acid Test

Ask yourself these questions:

- Ñ Does the reader know me?
- Ñ Does the reader like me?
- Ñ Does the reader want to do business with me?

If you have answered “No” to any of the above questions you will have to do some persuading to do in your report.

### Steps in the Persuasion Process

There are many ways to persuade others, although you will probably be most successful using a combination of several methods. Consider all approaches before you actually set the wheels in motion to go about persuading someone. Social psychologist William McGuire lists six such steps: presenting, attending, comprehending, yielding, retaining the new position, and acting.

#### Presenting

You can't persuade anyone of anything unless he or she is in the right place, at the right time, to receive the message. If the person doesn't read the proposal or hear your presentation, your message is not going to penetrate and be persuasive at all.

#### Attending

The person may be in the right place at the right time to read your proposal or see your presentation, but not pay any attention to it. They might be thinking of something else. The person must attend or pay attention to the message if you are to have any hope of persuading them.

#### Comprehending

If the person can't understand your message, there isn't much chance that he/she will be persuaded. The point is that you have to use a message that your audience can comprehend. If you don't, your message may be technically perfect, but it will fail to communicate, and thus fail to be understood.

#### Yielding

If the person got the message, and understood it, but remains unmoved from his or her previous position, communication has occurred but persuasion has not.

## Retaining the New Position

If your message has successfully persuaded someone to change their position, but has not been successful enough to make that person retain their new attitude over a period of time, for all practical purposes this attempt at persuasion has failed. It is not enough to get the message through. That message has to be retained long enough for the desired action to occur.

## Acting

Assume that your message was remembered and that you actually were persuasive enough for someone to retain a particular attitude. However, it was not successful or persuasive enough to get any action. You have been partially successful, but you may not have achieved what you set out to do.

## Summary

To be successful, persuasion must accomplish all six of these steps:

1. You must get your message to the audience.
2. You must get someone to pay attention to it.
3. The message must be understandable. People are more likely to read things they can understand. They won't come over to your side if they don't understand what your side is.
4. Your arguments must be convincing.
5. The audience must be willing to give in or to yield.
6. They must remember their new attitude and be willing to act.

## Designing Your Message

Design your message to take advantage of any helpful qualities your organization, your department, or you have.

**Credibility** is an important quality. Usually, the more credible a source, the more persuasive it is. The best way to be credible is to tell the truth, even when it hurts. Honesty and accuracy build credibility. What you write must also correspond to your organization's actions. Management can't represent one thing while you write something else.

Credibility has two major elements: **expertise** and **objectivity**. People are more likely to believe you if they think you know what you are talking about, but they must also believe you are telling the truth.

Being liked helps make persuasion more successful. So does being similar to audience members in some way. If you can find **common ground** between you and your audience, you are more likely to persuade them to your position.

**Perceived power** is another characteristic that leads to effective persuasion. If you have any power over your audience, then you are more apt to be successful in persuading them to see your point of view.

Finally, audiences tend to believe people who **know more than they do**—but not too much more!

### **Dealing with Tough Questions**

When you are writing a message, there are several fundamental but difficult questions you will likely have to answer.

#### **Should you only give one side of the story in your message?**

Generally speaking, no. If you can identify objections or the other person's side of the story first, you have gone a long way toward potentially defusing any objections that may exist.

#### **Which side should you give first?**

If you feel the other side has some strong arguments in their favor, get them out of the way first by bringing them up one by one and building your case against them. If you think the group will be largely in favor of your proposal, then you might get away with just mentioning them after you've swung the group to your way of thinking.

#### **Should you make conclusions specific or let the audience draw its own conclusions?**

It depends on the audience, their knowledge of the subject under discussion, and the manner in which you make conclusions. No group will want to be talked down to or patronized. On the other hand, if this is a group that is in unknown territory, you can help them draw their own conclusions.

#### **Do fear techniques work?**

Usually they may work short term but not long term, and then they will not only fear you but resent you.

#### **Is it better to use an emotional or a factual argument?**

Your best bet is to feel passionate about the facts.

## Test Your Knowledge

### Practical Application

Task	Item	✓
<b>Check the facts.</b>	Are the facts correct?	
	Are there any assumptions?	
<b>Check the length.</b>	Does it tell readers more than they want to know?	
	Does it miss important evidence?	
<b>Check the structure.</b>	Does it have a beginning that makes it clear what the report is about?	
	Does the middle develop and support the main idea?	
	Does the ending summarize, reinforce the point, and make recommendations?	
	Is each paragraph unified and coherent?	
	Does each paragraph relate to the main thesis?	
	Does each paragraph relate to the paragraph before and after it?	
<b>Check the style.</b>	Be on the lookout for lengthy, obscure sentences; wordiness; pretentiousness; overuse of the passive voice; and imprecise language.	
	Read the report out loud and circle parts where you stumble or you find yourself bored.	
	Cut, rearrange, and rewrite.	
<b>Check for errors.</b>	Check spelling and grammar.	
	Check punctuation.	
<b>Check the requirements.</b>	All mandatory requirements are included.	



## Giving Credit

### Citing Sources

If you use data from secondary sources, the data must be documented; that is, you must indicate where the data originated. Using the ideas of someone else without giving credit is **plagiarism** and is unethical.

Even if you paraphrase and put the information in your own words, the ideas must be documented. In citing sources, you should **use direct quotations sparingly**. Good writers use the exact words of another writer to emphasize opinions because of the author's status as an expert; duplicate the exact wording before criticizing; or repeat identical phrasing because of its precision, clarity, or aptness.

Citing sources strengthens your argument as a writer, and shields you from charges of plagiarism.

### Documentation Styles

These are **four popular styles of documentation**.

- Ñ **MLA** (Modern Language Association) is used in literature and most of the humanities.
- Ñ The **APA** (American Psychological Association), which is generally used in the social sciences
- Ñ The **CBE** (Council of Biology Editors) is used in biology and many other sciences.
- Ñ The **Chicago** Manual of Style which actually has two styles it favors.

Most styles ask that references be listed on a page by themselves, alphabetically by author, and includes all the references you used to produce your report. This list is called References, Works Cited, Cited References, or References, depending on the style you have used. (The Chicago Manual of Style uses the titles Bibliography, Selected Bibliography, and Works Cited.)

The list for any given paper or report may include a variety of sources. A source is anything you draw information from, and in your report you should list every source you use.

### Citing Sources

Every bibliography entry is created from a number of standard components. The most basic three are author, title, and publication information. As with all our writing, it is important to be consistent within your document, and demonstrate your attention to those details.

As you can see from the examples here, the differences between formats are pretty significant to look at, although the details are the same within each record.

#### **One author, in Chicago Manual style:**

Lynne Truss. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* , New York, Gotham Books, 1993

**One author, in American Psychological Association (APA) style:**

Truss, Lynne (1993). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation*. New York, Gotham Books, 1993

**One author, in British Broadcasting Corporation News Style Guidelines:**

**Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation**, Lynne Truss, Gotham Books, New York, 1993

**Entry Components**

Here is a list of each element you might find in a bibliography entry for a book or part of a book.

- Ñ The author’s or authors’ names (or the editor or editors’ names if you are referring to a collection). This part of the entry comes first, since a bibliography is in most cases an alphabetical listing by author of material used in writing a book or report.
- Ñ The title of the work.
- Ñ The name of the collection you found the work in.
- Ñ The editor’s or editors’ names (if the work appears in a collection), or translator or compiler, if one is used.
- Ñ The edition number for works other than a first edition.
- Ñ The number(s) of the volume(s) used.
- Ñ Publication data: the place of publication, followed by the publisher’s name, and in MLA, the date of the publication.
- Ñ The page numbers of the work, if the work is part of a collection.

**Test Your Knowledge**

**Bibliography Exercise**

**Bibliography Entry One**

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**Bibliography Entry Two**

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**Bibliography Entry Three**

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**Further Reading:**

- ✓ Cialdini, Robert, Noah Goldstein, and Steve Martin. *Yes! 50 Scientifically Proven Ways To Be Persuasive*. Free Press, 2008.
- ✓ Godin, Seth. *All Marketers are Liars*. Portfolio Hardcover, 2009.