

How to be Persuasive

- 1. Be yourself.** If you're uncomfortable doing this, say so. If one part of what you're pitching is more attractive than another part, to you personally, admit it. You don't need to act the role of a stereotyped "salesperson;" just let yourself be who you are, caring about what you're inviting them to.
- 2. Make sure this is an OK time to talk.** It's basically a waste of breath to talk with someone who is preoccupied with worries or homework or a date or getting to work. Ask if they have a few minutes, and if not, ask for a better time.
- 3. Keep checking in to see how they are receiving your message.** Ask, "Does that make sense?" "Do you think that matters?" "Can you picture yourself joining us?" "What hesitations would you have about it?" "What would you need to know for this to make sense to you?" "How can I persuade you to come with us for this action?" Remember, the beautiful thing about you talking with them (instead of their getting a leaflet about it) is that you can pay attention to them, to their interests and concerns.
- 4. If there's stuff you don't know, acknowledge it and offer to get back to them with the information.** Your honesty makes you more trustworthy than trying to gloss over something.
- 5. Ahead of time make it OK with you for the person to say no.** Figure that there are certain to be "No's" and getting a "No" moves you on to someone more likely to say "Yes."
Remember, they are not saying "No" to your worthiness as a person; they are just saying "No" to this project. When you know you can accept a "No," you more likely will be able to relax and enjoy it.
- 6. Remember that they haven't said "No" until they've said it.** When they leave the door open by saying "I'll think about it," "I might be busy that day," "That's not the kind of thing that grabs me," etc., keep the door open yourself. Try saying things like "How can I get more information to you to help your thinking?" "As you think about it, what might tilt you in favor of doing it?" "When will you know more about your schedule -- would it be OK if I got back to you?" "I'd love to have the chance to persuade you that this could interest you -- does any part of it make sense to you?" etc.
- 7. Thank them for their time whether they've said yes or no.** Today's nay-sayer may be tomorrow's yea-sayer for another action or event, partly depending on whether they felt accepted by you for where they are. On campuses, for example, the biggest obstacle to social action spreading among students may be the righteous attitude of some of the spreaders. You don't need to be righteous -- the cause **is** just. You can just be yourself.

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