

Great Negotiator's Lines

- 1 “Please correct me if I’m wrong, but it seems to me....”**
This allows you to introduce your points in a forceful way while still showing that you are open to correction or persuasion. It shows that you are firm but flexible.
- 2 “We just want an outcome that is fair to both sides.”**
As long as you mean it – and demonstrate it; a commitment to a fair outcome is a powerful principle that will strengthen your argument.
- 3 “I want you to feel like you’re being treated fairly at all times; so, please stop me at any time you feel I’m being unfair and we’ll address it.”**
Gives the other side permission to interrupt you. Also, it infers, by default, that if they’re not stopping you, they think you are being fair.
- 4 “So, if I’ve got it right, what you’re saying is...is that right, or not?”**
Paraphrasing (summarising what they’ve said in your own words) clarifies what their offer is, avoids any ambiguity of terminology, and eliminates any distracting ‘side-issues’ they may have introduced. Finishing with “or not?” forces them to respond with a yes or no. You may accompany this with letting them see you write it down (makes it harder for them to back-out later).
- 5 “The way I understand it, what’s most important to you is...”**
Getting ‘behind’ their position and talking about their interests (and their priorities) helps you to make your offer(s) more relevant and appealing. It also allows you to see if there are other options (outside their position) that might satisfy these interests.
- 6 “Help me understand your reasoning on...”**
Asks them to justify something they have said, but puts it in a less threatening way. ‘I’ Statements like this are a great way of contesting a point without becoming accusatory. For example: “Help me understand how you came up with that price” sounds better than “There’s no way you can justify a price like that!” Another way to say it is, “I’m sure you had some good reasons why you think that’s a reasonable offer. Could I hear them, please?”
- 7 “Before we make our offer, let me give our reasons...”**
Presenting the reasons before offering the proposal gives you the best chance of the proposal being heard.
- 8 “What this will do for you is...”**
Your offer will be much more powerful if it is accompanied by the benefits for the other party. Make sure your benefits always match their interests.

- 9 **“If we...will you...”**
Linking each offer to a concession from them is a good co-operative approach.
- 10 **“I’m not asking for any commitment here, but how would you feel if...”**
Test out options on the other side without making a formal offer. This is a really effective way of introducing new factors to the negotiation.
- 11 **“Do that if you want (carry out a proposed action); but just be aware that the effect will be...”**
This is NOT a threat; although it is a useful response to a threat from them. The key is that you are pointing out the negative consequences over which you have no control. (For example, the reactions of a third party.)
- 12 **“I just want to understand what’s important to you, because if we’re going to do a deal, it can only be the deal you want”**
This explains why you are asking about their interests – trying to get behind their position.
- 13 **“You must have had some very good reasons on which you based that offer. Could I hear them please?”**
Starts with a recognition of their cleverness (that they would use relevant criteria to determine their offer) then asks them to disclose in a way that will be very hard for them to refuse.
- 14 **Feel...felt...found**
Starts with acknowledging emotions in a pattern interrupter (not what they expect you to say) and follows by using social proof to counter their argument. Example: “I understand how you feel. Many others (people like you) felt the same way at first. But, what they found was (the opposite to what they expected).
- 15 **“Here is my suggestion for a package that will take into account everyone’s concerns. Who can’t live with that?”**
Moves the focus from what they want/are asking for and what they can live with. Helps set more realistic expectations.
- 16 **“Just assuming that we can reach agreement...”**
Focuses beyond the decision to the implementation, timing, benefits, problems, etc.