

Negotiation Quick Reference

A pocket guide for staying grounded, curious, and collaborative in any negotiation conversation.

THE PROCESS

1 Prepare

Clarify your goal and know your walk-away point (your BATNA) before you sit down.

2 Open

Set a collaborative tone. Name the shared goal before getting into the details.

3 Explore

Ask open questions. Listen for the "why" behind their position, not just the ask.

4 Propose

Offer options instead of ultimatums. Look for trades that cost you little but matter to them.

5 Close

Confirm what was agreed, ideally in writing. Set a clear next step or follow-up.

INTEREST-BASED TACTICS

Positions vs. interests

A position is what they say they want ("I need this by Friday"). An interest is why ("my boss checks in Monday"). Negotiate the interest.

Know your BATNA

Your Best Alternative To a Negotiated Agreement is your walk-away power. Knowing it keeps you from accepting a bad deal under pressure.

Trade, don't split

Instead of meeting in the middle, find what's low-cost for you but high-value for them, and vice versa.

Listen actively

Paraphrase before you respond: "So the real issue is ____ — is that right?"

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

UNCOVER THE REAL INTEREST

"What's driving the timeline on this?"

ASK "HOW" OR "WHAT," NOT "WHY"

"How can we make this work for both of us?"

"Why" can sound accusatory — "how/what" invites problem-solving.

WHEN IT GETS TENSE

ACKNOWLEDGE FIRST

"I hear that you're frustrated — I want to find something that works for both of us."

SLOW IT DOWN

"Let's pause for a second and make sure we're solving the same problem."

INVITE THEIR VIEW

"Help me understand what's driving that."

REDIRECT TO INTERESTS

"What would actually make this work for you?"

BUY TIME IF YOU NEED IT

"I want to give this a real answer — can we come back to it in a few minutes?"

BEFORE YOU RESPOND, ASK YOURSELF

- Am I reacting to their position, or their underlying interest?
- Is there a trade here neither of us has named yet?
- What does my BATNA tell me about how much room I actually have?
- Have I acknowledged how they feel before defending my position?