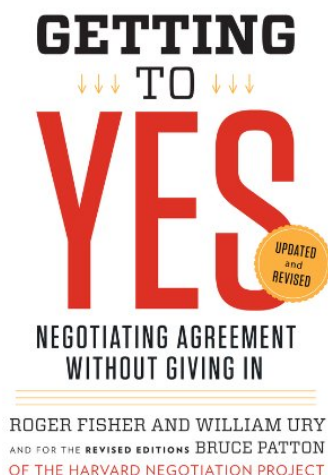


# Getting to Yes Book Summary, by Roger Fisher and William Ury

by Allen Cheng

<https://www.allencheng.com/getting-to-yes-summary-roger-fisher-william-ury/>

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER



*Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher and William Ury is a practical guide to negotiating more effectively whether you're haggling over a price, negotiating for a pay increase, or debating how to divide the housework. The authors propose an alternative to traditional adversarial bargaining, which often results in unfair agreements and strained relationships. Principled negotiation, by contrast, aims to reach wise and fair agreements efficiently and civilly. In addition to walking you through their method, the authors offer numerous tips and techniques for handling challenging negotiations. Anyone can use their method, under any circumstances.

## 1-Page Summary of Getting to Yes

In our daily lives, **we all negotiate with others for things we want**, whether the context is business or personal. For instance, at work we may negotiate a contract with a supplier, while at home we may negotiate with siblings over the division of family heirlooms or with a spouse over where to go on vacation.

In *Getting to Yes*, authors Roger Fisher and William Ury point out that the number of situations requiring negotiation is increasing. Organizational structures are less hierarchical than they used to be and **people expect to have a say in decisions that affect them rather than being dictated to by a boss**. This requires negotiation.

## **The Problem with Traditional Negotiation**

Despite the prevalence of negotiation, however, we don't do it very well. Most people haven't been taught negotiation skills, but a bigger problem is the inadequacy of the age-old adversarial method we use, which the authors call positional bargaining.

**\*\*In positional bargaining, each side starts with a position, argues and defends it, and bargains \*\*to reach a compromise. An example is when you bargain with a seller over the price of something.**

People tend to take one of two approaches: aggressive or friendly (hard or soft). Hard negotiators strive to win by taking the toughest positions and holding out the longest. They may use posturing, threats, and other strong-arm tactics. Those who take a friendlier approach try to avoid conflict and reach an amicable agreement. Neither approach is ideal. Positional bargaining often produces unfair, less-than-optimal outcomes, and it's inefficient and damages relationships.

## **The Solution: Principled Negotiation**

The authors offer an alternative approach, **principled negotiation, which is designed to generate fair agreements efficiently and civilly**. Negotiators decide issues on the objective merits (facts and evidence), rather than on what's acceptable or unacceptable to each side, and they look for mutual gains. Where interests conflict, results are based on fair, objective standards. Principled negotiators avoid deceptive tactics, posturing, and threats.

Anyone can use principled negotiation in almost any circumstances. There are four elements:

**1. People: Separate personalities and emotions from the issue being negotiated.** Because the relationship involves people and their emotions, it gets intertwined with the substance of the negotiations. For example, you may think you're simply pointing out a problem ("The warehouse is a mess"), but someone on the other side may take it as a personal attack or blaming. Handling people sensitively and respectfully is a prerequisite for successful negotiation and for a constructive ongoing relationship.

This is important because most negotiations involve a long-term relationship that's important to maintain. For instance, union members and bosses must be able to work together for a strong company bottom line and job stability.

**2. Interests: Focus on the underlying interests of each side, not on positions.** Interests involve people's needs, desires, fears, and concerns — they're the reasons behind the positions people take.

An example illustrates the difference. Two men get into an argument at a library because one wants to keep a window open while the other wants to close it; neither is willing to go halfway. The librarian asks

each man for his reasons. One wants the window open to get fresh air; the other wants it closed to avoid a draft. So, the librarian opens a window in an adjoining room to provide air flow and avoid creating a draft. She resolved the conflict by focusing on the men's underlying interests, rather than their positions on opening or closing a particular window.

**3. Options: Come up with multiple options based on mutual interests.** A common challenge in negotiations arises when there doesn't seem to be a way to split the pie that serves both sides. The choice seems to be having a winner and a loser, and neither side wants to lose. But the dilemma opens up the opportunity for creative options that expand the pie before dividing it. A creative solution can break an impasse and result in a better agreement.

For example, the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty reached at Camp David in 1978 succeeded in part because negotiators considered the interests behind the two countries' positions on the issue of what to do with the Sinai Peninsula, which Egypt had occupied since 1967. Each side wanted control over it and neither would compromise. Egypt's interest was in sovereignty over land of historical importance to them. Israel's interest was security — they didn't want Egyptian tanks positioned on their border. The solution addressing both interests was to give Egypt sovereignty but create large demilitarized zones.

**4. Criteria: Base the agreement on objective (fair and independent) standards.** Standard negotiations are a battle of wills. For instance, with a labor contract, the prevailing side determines the level of pay increases and benefits, based on their view of what's appropriate. But you can avoid arbitrary agreements by demanding the results meet objective standards independent of either side — for instance, market values, legal standards, average salaries, expert opinions or data, or customary practices. Instead of arguing about what either side is willing to accept, agree to objective standards that will serve as the rationale for the specifics in the agreement. That way, neither party is imposing their say-so for what's fair on the other.

## Key Skills for Getting to Yes

The book guides you through the process of principled negotiation with steps, techniques, and examples. Besides the method of principled negotiation, key skills include:

- **Determine your best available alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA).** The purpose of negotiating is to get better results than you'd get without negotiating. So when negotiating, you need to know your best alternative to negotiation in order to know whether to accept an agreement. Measure any proposed agreement against your best alternative or BATNA. It will protect you from accepting a bad agreement, as well as from rejecting a good agreement.
- **Defuse emotions that hinder discussion.** Talk openly with the other side about their emotions. Talk about your own emotions too. Acknowledge the emotions as legitimate. With emotions acknowledged, negotiations can be less reactive and more proactive; people can more easily focus on the substantive issues with emotions out of the way. Also, allow the other side to vent. Don't react to an emotional outburst and don't interrupt — just sit and listen. Then you can move on.
- **Build a positive relationship with the other side.** Before negotiations begin, get to know the people on the other side personally. It's easier to negotiate with someone you know than with a stranger. Meet informally, learn each others' likes and dislikes and take the time to chat when you run into people on the other side. Or use Ben Franklin's technique — he liked to ask an opponent if

he could borrow a specific book. Their common interest in the book made them more comfortable with each other and gave them something innocuous to chat about.

- **Counter dirty tricks by redirecting the discussion.** Positional bargainers may use a variety of strong-arm tactics in an effort to get you to succumb to their position, including lies, pressure tactics, and psychological tricks. The only effective way to counter these tactics is to use the techniques of principled negotiation to establish how you're going to negotiate (the rules of the game). Follow these steps: recognize the tactic, call attention to it, and question its validity as a tactic. Use the tactic as the basis for discussing how to negotiate constructively.
- **Negotiate effectively when there are differences around gender, ethnicity, or culture.** Be aware of differing beliefs and customs, but don't stereotype. Individuals' attitudes and characteristics may differ from those of their group (for instance, not all Japanese prefer indirect communication). This applies to genders as well. It's insulting to make assumptions based on the group to which someone belongs. Question your assumptions and be open to learning that others are different from what you expected. Everyone has special interests and qualities that don't fit any mold.
- **Reach a successful agreement when the other side is more powerful.** While wealth and connections enhance negotiating power, the power of each side also depends on negotiating skill and the strength of their alternative. If you have a stronger alternative — for instance, the ability to get a better price elsewhere — you can walk away from an agreement, which gives you leverage. The stronger your BATNA (best alternative to a negotiated agreement), the greater your power. Other power enhancers include a good working relationship, listening skills, and ability to identify the other side's interests and develop create mutually satisfying options.

To sum up, in contrast to adversarial bargaining, practicing principled negotiation allows you to treat people with empathy, work toward a wise agreement that's fair for both parties, negotiate efficiently without deliberate delays, and end the process on a positive note that bodes well for your future relationship.

## Full Summary of Getting to Yes

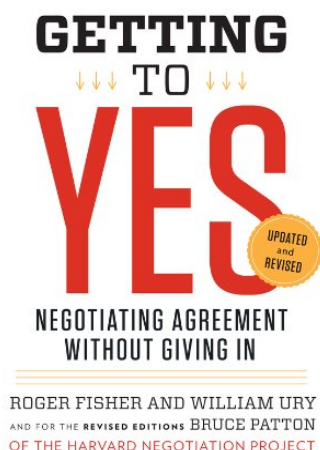
### Introduction

**We're all negotiators — negotiation is how we get what we want from others** in business and personal life. We negotiate with our bosses, clients, sellers, real estate agents, family members, and others. In fact, we reach most decisions in our lives through negotiation, often without realizing it.

In *Getting to Yes*, authors Roger Fisher and William Ury note that the number of situations requiring negotiation keeps increasing, which makes it essential to learn negotiation skills. Twenty or more years ago, command-and-control structures with a chain of bosses ordering our actions were commo...

## ---End of Preview---

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Read the rest of the "Getting to Yes" summary at my new book summary product, [Shortform](#).

Here's what you'll find in the **full Getting to Yes summary**:

- Introduction
- Exercise: Review Your Negotiations
- Part 1: Problems With Traditional Negotiation
- Exercise: Three Criteria
- Part 2: Principled Negotiation | Element 1: Separate Emotions from Issues
- Element 2: Focus on Interests
- Exercise: Identifying Interests
- Element 3: Invent Options for Mutual Gain
- Element 4: Insist on Objective Criteria
- Exercise: Finding an Objective Standard
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- Exercise: Dealing With Pressure Tactics
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