

Three of The Easiest Ways that Google Manipulates Voters into Doing What They Want

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You can do a lot of things to be more persuasive, from learning [better ways to communicate](#) to more [shady manipulation techniques](#). Here are some of the easiest (and possibly evil) ways to get someone to say "yes."

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How Can I Be More Convincing and Get Anything I Want?

Dear Lifehacker, I've read about how to plant ideas in someone's head, but the whole idea ...


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Scaring The Hell Out of You: The Fear-Then-Relief Procedure

What it is: Arguably the most evil manipulative technique is what psychologists call the "[fear-then-relief technique](#)." The technique preys on a person's emotions. Here, the manipulator causes someone a great

deal of stress or anxiety and then abruptly relieves that stress. After this sudden mood swing, the person is disarmed, less likely to make mindful or rational decisions, and more likely to respond positively to various requests.

Examples: The book [The Science of Social Influence](#) details a few experiments that showed this in action. In one, shoppers in a mall were scared by a stranger touching their shoulder from behind. When they turned around, the shoppers found that their assailant was a (supposed) blind man who just wanted to ask the time. After that deflection and relief, someone else—the fake blind man's confederate—asked the targets if they would buy and sign postcards for a political charitable cause. Those who had met the blind man and experienced the fear-then-relief rollercoaster were more likely to do so than the control group which wasn't manipulated.



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This fear-then-relief manipulation technique is most popularly portrayed in the classic bad cop/good cop routine: one person scares

the hell out of you, another saves you, and then you're more willing to talk. You see this in everyday life, too—from the fear tactics of insurance agents to bad managers who suggest your job is on the line, backtrack, and then ask you to work overtime. *Photo by [byjabneyhastings](#)*

Making You Feel Guilty: Social Exchange

What it is: One strategy con artists and unethical marketers use is simply called "social exchange." The book [The Dynamics of Persuasion](#) describes it as:

an interpersonal persuasion strategy in which Person A provides Person B with a tangible or psychological reward; in exchange, when Person A approaches B with a request for compliance, B feels pressure to comply.

Exchanging favors and doing things for others is a basic part of human society, but this can be manipulated by aggressive people.

Examples: A co-worker could remind you about that time they bailed you out big time in the past, then use that as leverage every time he/she needs something. Or someone who loaned you money or knows a secret of yours could continually blackmail you into doing what they want (a subject [we've covered extensively](#)). *Photo by [Jhayne](#)*

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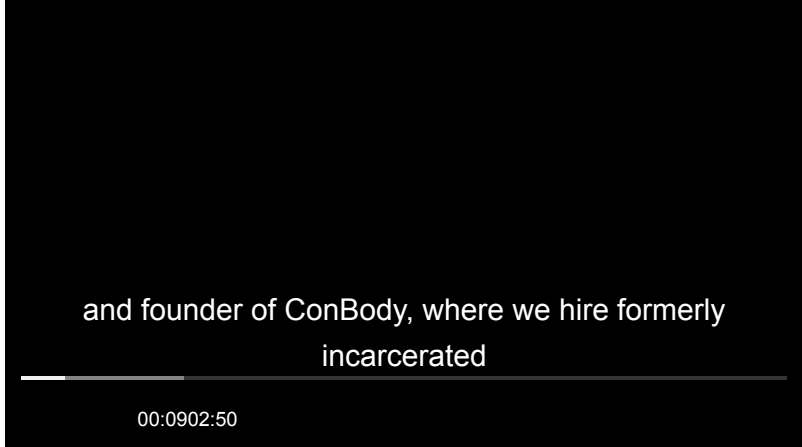
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Priming You With a Small Request: The Foot-in-the-Door Technique

What it is: This manipulation technique is evil because it's so tricky, subtle, and simple. With the [foot-in-the-door](#) method, someone asks you to do a very small and easy request and then follows up with the real request.

Examples: [NPR](#) gives an example of a panhandler who asks you for the time, then asks you to spare a buck. By getting you to say yes to one request, you're more likely to say yes to a second one. *Photo by [clarity](#)*

Avoiding These Manipulations

Just knowing about manipulative techniques can help you avoid falling victim to them. For

the fear-then-relief technique, for example, be on the lookout whenever you feel a surge in negative and then positive emotions. You're more vulnerable at that time to do things mindlessly and at the suggestion of others. Watch out for statements that follow this general formula: *[Something terrible] could have happened to you, but it [didn't/won't]. [Now do this]*. These aren't the only ways someone could trick you into saying yes, of course, but they are some of the more common—just keep an eye out, stay on your toes, and you should be able to spot when someone's trying to pull a fast one.

This post is part of our [Evil Week](#) series at Lifehacker, where we look at the dark side of getting things done. Knowing evil means knowing how to beat it, so you can use your sinister powers for good. Want more? Check out our [evil week tag page](#).