

Simple Jury Persuasion: The foot-in-the-face technique

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What a great name for a persuasion technique! You've likely heard of [foot-in-the-door](#) or the [door-in-the-face techniques](#) and perhaps even the [foot-in-the-mouth technique](#)!

The foot-in-the-door technique is the idea that if someone agrees to a small request, they are then more likely to agree with a larger request. This technique originated in 1966 following some research where participants were asked to sign a highway safety petition and then asked (once they agreed) to have a large ugly billboard placed on their front lawn for a week. [Thank goodness for current-day HOA's!]

The door-in-the-face technique was so-named by [Robert Cialdini](#) in 1975 following research in which he asked for compliance with a difficult request (be a 2 hour per week volunteer counselor with adolescent delinquents for 2 years) and then followed up with an easier request (take adolescent delinquents to the zoo one time). Cialdini found participants much more likely to agree with the second easier request when the first difficult request was initially posed.

The foot-in-the-face technique involves asking for a moderately difficult task to be completed and then, regardless of what the person says, you ask immediately for a second [moderately difficult] task to be done.

In the current research project, researchers chose to make two requests, both of moderate difficulty. Two men, who introduced themselves as geography students, visited 200 subjects in their own homes and asked for help collecting data for their master's theses. Half of the participants were first asked to perform a daily reading of temperature and the other half were asked to measure air pressure values. Regardless of their response to the first request, they were then asked to do the second task (i.e., either measure and document temperature or air pressure).

About half of the subjects complied with the initial request [101 of 200, 50.5%] and even more complied with the second request [131/200, 65.5%]. Of the 101 people who agreed with the initial request, 91 agreed to measure the additional parameter. Of the 99 participants who refused the first request, 40 actually agreed to measure the second request. The researchers conclude that while the "agreement route" (those who agreed to the first request) was easier, the foot-in-the-face technique is valid because of those who agreed to the first request but turned down the

second request and those who agreed to the second request even when turning down the first request [“the refusal route”].

Follow-up studies achieved compliance rates between 63% and 68%. The researchers say the foot-in-the-face technique is most effective if the second request is made immediately after the first is refused or if the second request is posed after a delay if the first has been fulfilled. Further, the two requests must be of similar difficulty if the effect is to work.

This is one of those strategies it would be difficult to accomplish with jurors. But it’s possible to consider for strategic use in mediation, negotiation or in other bargaining situations. It’s intriguing to observe the evolving field of persuasion research—some directly applicable to our work and others that require some consideration for practical utility. Many of us are used to the foot-in-the-door technique and the door-in-the-face technique and it will take time for us to warm to the foot-in-the-face strategy. However, it will be hard for us to forget the name!

Dolinski, D. (2011). A rock or a hard place: The foot-in-the-face technique for inducing compliance without pressure. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 41* (6)