20 Negotiation Tactics: What They Are, How to Identify Them & How to Navigate Them

---

1. The Anchoring Tactic

What it is: Throwing out the first number to psychologically set the "center of gravity."
How to identify it: They present a number early — often extreme — before discussing value.
How to navigate: Acknowledge it, detach emotionally, and reset the frame:

> "I understand that's where you'd like to be — let's zoom out and look at what you're actually wanting to solve."

---

2. The "Budget Constraint" Move

What it is: Claiming they have no money, approval, or budget for your solution.
How to identify it: Phrases like *"We only have $X"* or *"This wasn't budgeted."*
How to navigate: Disarm, then diagnose whether it's real or resistance:

> "Totally fair — help me understand how budgets are typically handled when solving this kind of problem?"

---

3. The "Need to Think About It" Delay

What it is: A stall tactic that removes urgency and avoids a hard no.
How to identify it: Vague delays, unclear decision criteria, evasiveness.
How to navigate: Lean into clarification, not pressure:

> "Of course — what part specifically are you still unsure about?"

---

4. The Red Herring

What it is: Distracting you with a secondary issue to gain leverage.
How to identify it: They fixate on something minor (timeline, feature, small detail).
How to navigate: Bring them back to the core problem:

> "Totally — and we can address that. Before we do, can we revisit the main challenge you're solving?"

---

5. The "Good Cop, Bad Cop" Routine

What it is: One person is friendly; another is rigid to create pressure.
How to identify it: The tone difference is exaggerated; contradictions appear.
How to navigate: Neutralize the dynamic:

> "Sounds like there are a few viewpoints here. Let's get aligned on what matters most."

---

6. The "Take It or Leave It" Ultimatum

What it is: Forcing a binary choice to push a fast decision.
How to identify it: Absolutes like "final offer," "non-negotiable," or "must be done today."
How to navigate: Don't react — reframe:

> "I appreciate the clarity. Before we finalize anything, can we explore the impact of each option?"

---

7. The "Flinch" Reaction

What it is: Exaggerated shock to make you question your price or position.
How to identify it: Dramatic facial expressions, "Whoa!", "That's way higher than expected."
How to navigate: Stay steady:

> "I hear you. Most people react that way at first — until they see XYZ."

---

8. The Nibble

What it is: Asking for small concessions after agreement is near.
How to identify it: “Since we’re so close, could you also throw in…”
How to navigate: Trade, don’t give:

> “If we adjust that, let’s also adjust X to keep things balanced.”

---

9. The “Higher Authority” Escape Hatch

What it is: Claiming someone else must approve to delay or renegotiate.
How to identify it: “I need to run this past my partner/boss/board.”
How to navigate: Reverse-engineer the real decision path:

> “Makes total sense — what will they need to see or understand to feel confident?”

---

10. The “Limited Options” Constraint

What it is: Pretending fewer choices exist to corner you.
How to identify it: “We can only consider X or Y.”
How to navigate: Expand the frame:

> “Let’s zoom out — what outcome are you actually trying to achieve?”

---

11. The “Silence” Tactic

What it is: Using quiet to make you fill the space and concede.
How to identify it: Long pauses, nodding, waiting without responding.
How to navigate: Match the silence with calm confidence. Ask a clarifying question if needed.

---

12. Cherry-Picking Comparisons

What it is: Comparing your offer to irrelevant cheaper alternatives.
How to identify it: “Vendor B charges half that.”
How to navigate: Shift from price to values/outcomes:

“How does Vendor B’s solution address [their pain point]?”

---

13. The False Deadline

What it is: Creating artificial urgency to push a commitment.
How to identify it: Unverifiable time pressure.
How to navigate: Bring it back to their goals:

> “If timeline weren’t an issue, what would the right decision look like?”

---

14. The “Scarcity Bluff”

What it is: Pretending they have many alternatives to reduce your leverage.
How to identify it: “We have three other vendors ready to go.”
How to navigate: Don’t chase — explore fit:

> “Totally fair — what makes you continue the conversation with us?”

---

15. The “Emotional Appeal” or Sympathy Play

What it is: Using guilt or personal stories to get concessions.
How to identify it: Sudden emotional shifts tied to pricing.
How to navigate: Empathize, but anchor in outcomes:

> “I hear that — and I want to make sure you get the solution that actually solves this.”

---

16. The “Lowball” Offer

What it is: Starting with an unrealistically low price to pull you downward.
How to identify it: Offers far below market norms.
How to navigate: Reset expectations:

> “It sounds like you’re hoping for X — can we explore what you’re comparing that to?”

---

17. The “Information Overload” Wave

What it is: Flooding you with data to obscure what actually matters.
How to identify it: They bring spreadsheets, reports, excessive metrics.
How to navigate: Reduce complexity:

> “Let’s simplify — what’s the core problem you’re solving again?”

---

18. The “Walk-Away” Threat

What it is: Pretending they’ll abandon the deal to force concessions.
How to identify it: “If we can’t do this, we’re out.”
How to navigate: Stay neutral:

> “Totally understand. Before you decide, let’s clarify what’s most important so you don’t lose what you’re trying to solve.”

---

19. The “Rehash” Move

What it is: Reopening settled terms to grind you down.
How to identify it: “Let’s revisit X again…”
How to navigate: Re-anchor the progress:

> “We’ve already aligned on X — the only thing left is Y.”

---

20. The “Feigning Ignorance” Play

What it is: Pretending not to understand to stall or avoid committing.
How to identify it: Repeatedly asking the same question in different ways.
How to navigate: Don’t re-explain — ask them to clarify:

> “Sounds like something’s still unclear — which part isn’t landing?”