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10 Power Negotiation Tactics

*Close deals like Warren Buffett.
Without losing the room.*

PAGES	READ TIME	TACTICS
12	15 min	10



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01

INTRODUCTION

Negotiation is the highest-paid skill on Earth.

15 minutes of negotiation can earn (or lose) you more than 6 months of work.

Warren Buffett bought See's Candies in 1972 for \$25 million. By 2019, it had generated **\$2 billion in pre-tax profit** for Berkshire Hathaway. The original deal? Negotiated in a single afternoon.

The same applies to:

- **Your salary** — most professionals leave ₹3-8 lakhs/year on the table because they accept the first offer.
- **Vendor contracts** — 10-25% is almost always negotiable.
- **Rent** — landlords usually have 5-15% room.
- **Business deals** — the difference between a great deal and a good deal is often one conversation.

CORE PRINCIPLE

You're not negotiating *against* the other side. You're negotiating *with* them — for a deal that works for both. The 10 tactics below come from Chris Voss (FBI hostage negotiator), Roger Fisher (Getting to Yes), and Warren Buffett's recorded deals.

None of these are tricks. They're tools — used by people who close billion-dollar deals routinely. Practice them. They compound over a career.

1 TACTIC ONE

Silence after the offer.

The most powerful word in negotiation isn't a word. It's silence.

Make your offer. Then shut up. Don't justify. Don't soften. Don't add "but I'm flexible". Don't fill the silence.

Most people can't handle 5 seconds of silence. They start negotiating against themselves: "Of course, that's just a starting point...", "Let me know what works...", "I can be flexible..."

Don't be most people.

HOW TO APPLY IT

- Make your number. Stop talking.
- Wait at least 10 seconds (feels like an hour, it's not).
- Whoever talks first is the one giving ground.
- If they ask for justification, give one sentence. Stop again.

REAL EXAMPLE

A reader asked for ₹18L. The hiring manager said, "We were thinking ₹14L." The reader didn't respond for 8 seconds. The manager continued, "But for someone with your background, we could go to ₹16L." Reader still silent. Manager: "Let me check with leadership — I can probably get you ₹17.5L." Final offer: ₹17.5L. Worth 3 minutes of silence.

2

TACTIC TWO

Walk-away power.

If you can't walk away, you've already lost.

Every time you sit down to negotiate, ask yourself: "What's my walk-away point?" If you don't have one, you're not negotiating — you're begging.

The party with more walk-away power wins. Always.

HOW TO BUILD WALK-AWAY POWER

1. **Have alternatives.** Talk to 3 buyers/sellers/employers before you commit to one.
2. **Know your minimum.** Below this number, you walk. Decided before you enter the room.
3. **Don't fall in love with the deal.** Emotional attachment = lost leverage.
4. **Show willingness to walk early.** "If this doesn't work for both of us, no hard feelings."
Plants the seed.

WARNING

Fake walk-aways are obvious. If you threaten to walk and don't, you lose all leverage permanently. Only invoke walk-away power if you're genuinely willing to follow through.

3

TACTIC THREE

BATNA: Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement.

Your BATNA is what you do if this deal falls through. The stronger your BATNA, the stronger your position.

Coined by Roger Fisher in *Getting to Yes*, BATNA is the foundation of every modern negotiation.

HOW TO DEVELOP A STRONG BATNA

- **For a job:** Have 2-3 offers in parallel. Or be prepared to stay in your current role another 6 months.
- **For a vendor:** Get 3 quotes. Mention you have alternatives.
- **For business:** Have customers/partners who could fill the gap.
- **For rent:** Identify 2 backup apartments before negotiating.

THE 30-MINUTE EXERCISE

Before any negotiation, write down: (1) What's my BATNA? (2) What's their BATNA? (3) What's the ZOPA (Zone of Possible Agreement)? This 30-minute exercise outperforms 80% of negotiators who skip it.

WHY THIS WORKS

When you have a strong BATNA, you negotiate from confidence — not desperation. The other side senses this. They make better offers because they know you won't accept worse ones.

4

TACTIC FOUR

Anchoring.

Whoever names the first number sets the gravity of the deal.

This is contrary to common advice ("never name the first number"). The truth: **research shows the first offer anchors the negotiation 70%+ of the time**, IF it's an aggressive but defensible number.

HOW TO ANCHOR

- **Selling:** Start ~20% above your target. They negotiate down to where you wanted.
- **Buying:** Start ~20% below your target.
- **Salary:** Quote your top 10% expectation. Defend with market data.

5

TACTIC FIVE

Never split the difference.

The middle isn't fair. The middle is laziness pretending to be diplomacy.

Chris Voss's most famous principle. If you ask ₹100 and they offer ₹50, "let's meet at ₹75" is the worst outcome — you both lose your real position.

Better: "I can't go to ₹50, but I'd consider ₹85 if X." Counter with an 80/20 split toward you, with a concession (X) you can give cheaply.

THE 80/20 RULE

Aim for 80% of your number with 20% of what they want. Both feel they won — and the math actually favors you. Far better than 50/50 in your direction.

6

TACTIC SIX

The flinch.

React to every first offer with visible surprise — even if it's reasonable.

This is a 4,000-year-old market technique. When the price is quoted, you flinch. Wince. Look surprised. Say "Oh no — that's a lot more than I had in mind."

Why? Because the next words out of their mouth will almost always be a justification or a discount. They've been conditioned by social training to soften.

HOW TO FLINCH

- In person: physical reaction (head shake, raised eyebrows, "wow").
- On call: pause, then "Hmm... that's higher than I was expecting."
- In email: "Appreciate the offer. The number is more than we'd allocated. What flexibility do you have?"

7

TACTIC SEVEN

"How am I supposed to do that?"

When asked to accept something you don't like, ask this question instead of saying no.

This question makes the other side **solve your problem** for you. It's open-ended. It's polite. It forces them to either justify (which weakens their position) or offer a better deal.

REAL USE

Manager: "We can't do above ₹15L for this role." You: "I understand. Help me see — with my background and the cost of moving for this job, how am I supposed to make this work?" Now they're problem-solving. Usually the offer increases ₹2-5L within a few minutes.

8

TACTIC EIGHT

Deadline pressure (use it both ways).

Deadlines force decisions. You can create them, or refuse to be controlled by them.

CREATING DEADLINES (USE SPARINGLY)

- "I need to commit to one of three offers by Friday."
- "This quote is valid until end of month."
- "I have another buyer viewing it this weekend."

REFUSING DEADLINES

When pressured: "I appreciate the urgency, but I'm not going to make a [salary/lease/contract] decision without thinking. If the deal requires a 24-hour decision, that itself tells me something about the relationship we'd have."

9

TACTIC NINE

Written > verbal.

"Can you put that in an email?" filters tire-kickers and locks in commitments.

Verbal promises evaporate. Written ones don't. Whenever someone makes a promise verbally, request it in writing. Reasonable parties comply. Unreasonable ones reveal themselves.

PRO TIP

For salary: "Could you send the final offer with all components in writing — I want to make sure I understand it fully before deciding." Forces clarity on all numbers (base, variable, ESOPs, joining bonus, signing dates).

10 TACTIC TEN

The quivering pen.

The last small ask, made right before signing, almost always gets granted.

Once both sides have agreed and the pen is hovering over the paper (or the email "Send" button is hovering over the cursor) — humans hate to lose a closed deal over small things. Use this.

EXAMPLES

- "Before I sign — could you include 2 extra days of leave?"
- "Just one thing — could the joining bonus come in 30 days vs 90?"
- "Last ask — can you waive the processing fee?"

USE CAREFULLY

This tactic is powerful but burns trust if overused. Use it for ONE small ask, after substantive negotiation is done. Never for big asks — those need to be on the table earlier.

Why it works

Psychology: the deal is already mentally closed for both parties. The energy required to renegotiate is higher than the cost of granting a small concession. People grant the small ask to lock in the bigger deal.

Buffett uses this. So does every M&A lawyer. Use it.

11

REAL SCRIPTS

3 word-for-word scripts you can use this week.

SCRIPT 1: SALARY NEGOTIATION

Recruiter: "We were thinking ₹14L."

You: *[Brief flinch.]* "Hmm. Based on my research and current offers, I was expecting closer to ₹18L." *[Silence.]*

Recruiter: "Let me see what I can do — maybe ₹16L?"

You: "I appreciate that. Help me see — given the relocation and what the market is paying for this role, how am I supposed to make ₹16L work?"

Recruiter: "Okay — best I can do is ₹17.5L."

You: "That works. Could you also extend the joining timeline by 2 weeks? *[Quivering pen.]*"

SCRIPT 2: VENDOR / SERVICE QUOTE

Vendor: "Our package is ₹75,000."

You: "Thanks for the quote. I've got 2 other vendors quoting between ₹50-60K for comparable scope. What's your flexibility?"

Vendor: "Best we can do is ₹68K."

You: "I'd love to work with you. If we can land at ₹58K, I can confirm by end of day and pay 50% upfront. Could you make that work?"

SCRIPT 3: RENT

Landlord: "Rent is ₹35,000/month."

You: "Appreciate it. I've seen 2 similar flats in the area at ₹30-32K. I'm a stable tenant — 0 issues with previous landlords. Could we agree on ₹31K? I'd happily sign a 24-month lease at that."

12

ACTION PLAN

Your 7-day negotiation challenge.

Don't just read this. Use it. Pick one negotiation this week — and apply at least 3 tactics.

- **Day 1** — Pick the negotiation. Salary, vendor, rent, or business deal.

- **Day 2** — Research. What's the market rate? What are 3 alternatives (BATNA)?

- **Day 3** — Write down your: (a) ideal outcome, (b) walk-away point, (c) anchor number.

- **Day 4** — Practice script (record yourself on phone). Watch playback. Adjust.

- **Day 5** — Initiate the conversation. Use silence + anchor + flinch.

- **Day 6** — Counter with "how am I supposed to" + 80/20 split.

- **Day 7** — Before signing: quivering pen for ONE small ask.

Tools to learn more

- **Book:** *Never Split the Difference* — Chris Voss
- **Book:** *Getting to Yes* — Roger Fisher
- **Article:** "How Buffett negotiates" (HBR archives)
- **Practice:** Negotiate something small daily (vegetable vendor, rickshaw, Amazon return) — build the muscle.

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