

How to Win Friends and Influence People Summary – Dale Carnegie

14 MINUTE READ

[How to Win Friends and Influence People Summary](#) (1936)

by [Dale Carnegie](#)

How to Win Friends and Influence People is THE classic guide to greatly improving effectiveness and efficiency by mastering the ability to work with and through the people around you - by self-improvement guru, Dale Carnegie. ([288 pages](#))

[Paperback](#) | [Ebook](#) | [Audiobook](#)

Note: This **How to Win Friends and Influence People Summary** **summary** is part of an ongoing project to summarise the [Best Communication Books](#) and [Best Self Help Books](#) of all time.

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How to Win Friends and Influence People Summary Review

Dale Carnegie's [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#) is a treasure trove of practical tips for building better relationships.

If you asked me for just one book that you should read this year, this would be my recommendation. Its timeless wisdom will change your life.

Think that's an exaggeration? Consider that:

- It has sold over 30 million copies since its first edition in 1936.
- It is consistently voted among the most influential books in American history.
- It still, to this day, sells hundreds of thousands of copies each year.

So why haven't you read it yet?

There are two reasons I almost passed over it:

1. The title sounds like [a manipulative book](#) on [Neurolinguistic Programming \(NLP\)](#).
2. I didn't think I needed advice on how to make friends or influence people.

Neither of these points could have been further from the truth.

I'll use Carnegie's own words to answer the first point:

"The principles taught in this book will work only when they come from the heart. I am not advocating a bag of tricks. I am talking about a new way of life."

Or perhaps you'd prefer something from Henry Ford:

"If there is any one secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point of view and see things from that person's angle as well as from your own."

Neither of those statements entails manipulative shortcuts. As you'll see, it is impossible to apply Carnegie's tips without genuinely becoming a kinder, more thoughtful person.

As for the second: If you feel uncomfortable reading books on self-improvement, I hear you. The question to ask yourself though is, *"What have I got to lose?"*

Carnegie's wise words on the topic are:

"Nothing will work in all cases – and nothing will work with all people. If you are satisfied with the results you are now getting, why change? If you are not satisfied, why not experiment?"

And it's an important argument that authors like Timothy Ferriss are still using today:

"Much of what I recommend will seem impossible and even offensive to basic common sense – I expect that. Resolve now to test the concepts as an exercise in lateral thinking."

A bet with minimal downside, and a high upside, is one you should take every time.

And how big is the upside? It's high. According to the late John D. Rockefeller:

"The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee, and I will pay more for the ability than for any other under the sun."

Convinced? The good news is that this book is not only good on “*Why*” and “*What*”, it’s also great on “*How*”.

Carnegie ran his popular self-improvement programs for decades with participants from every conceivable walk of life. His book is full of their stories. Stories about how they applied these principles. Stories about the huge changes they made in their own lives.

Reinventing the wheel is an extremely difficult and masochistic pastime. You may remember these wise words from Seneca: tutor to Roman emperors and (at one time) one of the wealthiest men alive:

*“There is nothing the busy man is less busied with than living; **there is nothing harder to learn.**”*

So, read this book. Learn from it. Keep it handy. Refer back to it often (I wish I had followed this advice more faithfully).

It will make you a better person. It will improve your life. Most importantly, it will improve the lives of the people you love and the people you meet every day.

And remember:

“As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world... as in being able to remake ourselves.”

Mahatma Gandhi

N.B., this feels like a bit of a cheat book summary as the material is already extremely well organised. You’ll notice a lot more direct quoting than usual. Mainly because “*If it ain’t broke...*”. Enjoy!

How to Win Friends and Influence People Summary Summary

As per the structure of the original book, I've split this *How to Win Friends and Influence People* summary into 5 sections:

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Click a link above to skip ahead or keep reading below...

3 Fundamental Techniques in Handling People

1. **Don't criticise, condemn, or complain.** *"Criticism is futile because it puts a person on the defensive and usually makes him strive to justify himself. Criticism is dangerous because it wounds a person's precious pride, hurts his sense of importance and arouses resentment."* Put as much time and space between emotion and action as possible. [Empathise and forgive](#). Do not measure others by [the standards you set for yourself](#).
2. **Give honest and sincere appreciation.** *"The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated."* Be *"hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise."* but avoid hollow flattery. Instead, make your appreciation heartfelt, sincere and unselfish. Flattery is easily detected and universally condemned.
3. **Arouse in the other person an eager want.** *"The only way on earth to influence other people is to talk about what they want and show them how to get it... you may want to persuade somebody to do something. Before you speak, pause and ask yourself: 'How can I make this person want to do it?'"*

6 Ways to Make People Like You

1. **Become genuinely interested in other people.** *“You can make more friends in two months by being interested in them, than in two years by making them interested in you... If we want to make friends, let’s put ourselves out to do things for other people – things that require time, energy, unselfishness and thoughtfulness”.* Make it a priority to keep an eye out for things that might improve other people’s lives. A great practical tip from Carnegie is as simple as follows:

1. Take the time to find out the birthdays of friends and acquaintances.
2. Make a note of them in your calendar.
3. Take the time each year to send a physical card.

This kind of thoughtfulness costs little and has a huge impact.

2. **Smile.** *“The expression one wears on one’s face is far more important than the clothes one wears on one’s back.”* Smile in everything that you do. Smile sincerely, *“An insincere grin... doesn’t fool anybody. We know it is mechanical and we resent it.”* Don't feel like smiling? Consider Abraham Lincoln's remark that *“most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”* Still struggling? Fake it until you make it. Force yourself to smile and the mind will often follow.
3. **Remember that a person’s name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.** *“The average person is more interested in their own name than in all the other names in the world put together.”* Remembering a person’s name is a question of effort, not ability. Ask a person’s name. Pay attention. Make sure you’ve heard it. Spell it out if need be. Repeat it several times. [Build a mental picture](#). Write it down. Don’t then become the weirdo who thinks repeating the other person’s name after every sentence will make them like you. That’s not how it works, be cool.
4. **Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves.**

“Exclusive attention to the person who is speaking to you is very important. Nothing else is so flattering as that.” Doing so will soften and subdue even the most violent critic and you may also learn a thing or two. *“To be interesting, be interested. Ask questions that the other person will enjoy answering.”* And remember: *“A person’s toothache means more to [them] than a famine... which kills a million people.”*

5. **Talk in terms of the other person’s interest.** *“The royal road to a person’s heart is to talk about the things he or she treasures most.”* Take the time to understand or even research a topic you know is of interest to someone else. Ask them about their past: *“Almost every successful person likes to reminisce about their early struggles.”* Doing so will not only improve your relationship, it might enlarge your life.
6. **Make the other person feel important – and do it sincerely.** *“Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”* Obey this golden rule *“All the time, everywhere”*. Use little phrases like *“I’m sorry to trouble you,”* *“Would you be so kind as to – ?”* *“Would you mind?”* and *“Thank you.”* *“Almost all the people you meet feel superior to you in some way, and a sure way to their hearts is to let them realise in some subtle way that you realise their importance and recognise it sincerely.”*

12 Ways to Win People to Your Way of Thinking

1. **The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it.** *“You can’t win an argument. You can’t because if you lost it, you lose it; and if you win it, you lose it,”* because, *“a man convinced against his will, is of the same opinion still”*. Instead, try to:
 1. Welcome the disagreement – you might avoid a serious mistake.
 2. Watch out for and distrust your first instinct to be defensive.
 3. Control your temper.
 4. Listen first.

5. Look first for areas of agreement.
 6. Be honest about and apologise for your mistakes.
 7. Promise to think over your opponent's ideas and study them carefully.
 8. Thank the other person sincerely for their time and interest.
 9. Postpone action to give both sides time to think through the problem.
2. **Show respect for the other person's opinions. Never say "You're wrong."** It's *"tantamount to saying: 'I'm smarter than you are.'"* Instead, consider that *"you will never get into trouble by admitting that you may be wrong"* and see the above point. Even if you know you are right, try something like: *"I may be wrong. I frequently am. If I'm wrong I want to be put right. Let's examine the facts."*
 3. **If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically.** *"By fighting you never get enough, but by yielding you get more than you expected."* Have the courage to admit your errors. Let the other person take the role of a collaborative and benevolent forgiver rather than an opponent.
 4. **Begin in a friendly way.** Friendliness begets friendliness. Glow with it. Overflow with it. Remember that *"a drop of honey can catch more flies than a gallon of gall."* and see also [Aesop's fable "The Wind and the Sun"](#).
 5. **Get the other person saying 'yes, yes' immediately.** *"Begin by emphasising – and keep emphasising – the things on which you agree... that you are both striving for the same end and that your only difference is one of method and not of purpose."* Try to begin with questions to which the only conceivable reply is "Yes". This will help things get off on a collaborative foot. And remember, *"He who treads softly goes far."*
 6. **Let the other person do a great deal of the talking.** *"Let other people talk themselves out. They know more about their business and problems than you do. So ask the questions. Let them tell you a*

few things... Don't [interrupt]... They won't pay attention to you while they still have a lot of ideas of their own crying for expression". Don't waste air boasting about your own achievements: "If you want enemies, excel your friends; but if you want friends, let your friends excel you."

7. **Let the other person feel the idea is his or hers.** *"You have much more faith in ideas that you discover for yourself than in ideas that are handed to you."* Allow others to design and become invested in their own solutions. Consult with them, collaborate on and influence a half-finished idea rather than presenting a final solution. Avoid self-importance, instead, remember *"The reason why rivers and seas receive the home of a hundred mountain streams is that they keep below them."*
8. **Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view.** Take the time to put yourself in the other person's shoes. If you can, sit down with a piece of paper and a pen. Set a timer for 10 minutes and begin with the words: *"What X is probably feeling now is..."* Keep writing from their perspective until the timer goes off.
9. **Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and desires.** Begin always with *"I don't blame you one iota for feeling as you do. If I were you I would undoubtedly feel just as you do."* Be honest about your own flaws and idiosyncrasies. It will help you be more sympathetic with those of others. Remember *"Three-fourths of the people you will ever meet are hungering and thirsting for sympathy. Give it to them, and they will love you"*.
10. **Appeal to the nobler motives.** *"People are honest and want to discharge their obligations, the exceptions to that rule are comparatively few".* They *"will in most cases react favourably if you make them feel that you consider them honest, upright and fair"*.
11. **Dramatise your ideas.** Present your ideas in an interesting, creative and dramatic way that captures attention. Think laterally; how can you present tabular data in a creative way that encourages

interaction and engages more of the senses than just sight? Take your inspiration from television and advertising – they've been in this game a long time.

12. **Throw down a challenge.** *"The way to get things done is to stimulate competition. I do not mean in a sordid money-getting way, but in the desire to excel."* Pay is not enough to motivate people. Instead, the work itself must be motivating and exciting. Make performance metrics public. Let people enjoy a challenge. *"That is what every successful person loves: the game. The chance for self-expression. The chance to prove his or her worth, to excel, to win."*

9 Ways to Be a Leader Without Giving Offence or Arousing Resentment

N.b., the judgement and skill behind the "How" in this section is more advanced and subtle. Carnegie illustrates them with some superb examples that are well worth reading in full.

1. **Begin with praise and honest appreciation.** *"Beginning with praise is like the dentist who begins with his work with Novocain. The patient still gets a drilling, but the Novocain is pain-killing."*
2. **Call attention to people's mistakes indirectly.** A great tip given here is to use the word "and" whenever you feel like using the word "but". This avoids devaluing the initial praise and move feedback to a "good to greater" mindset.
3. **Talk about your own mistakes before criticising the other person.** *"Admitting one's own mistakes – even when one hasn't corrected them – can help convince somebody to change his behaviour."* Call attention to or remember back to when you also struggled with whatever it is you are giving feedback on. Be open and specific with your examples. Talk about how and why you (wish you'd) worked through them instead of criticising directly.
4. **Ask questions instead of giving direct orders.** *"Asking questions*

not only makes an order more palatable; it often stimulates the creativity of the persons whom you ask.” N.B., this doesn’t work with obviously leading questions. Instead, see “Let the other person feel the idea is his or hers.”

5. **Let the other person save face.** *“I have no right to say or do anything that diminishes a man in his own eyes. What matters is not what I think of him, but what he thinks of himself. Hurting a man in his dignity is a crime.”* It’s also a quick way to shut down collaboration completely. Even if you must correct or criticise someone, never do it in front of someone else. *“Even if we are right and the other person is definitely wrong, we only destroy ego by causing someone to lose face.”*
6. **Praise every improvement.** *“Abilities wither under criticism; they blossom under encouragement.”* Can you look back on your own life and see where a few words of praise have sharply changed your entire future? Be specific and sincere. Remember, *“we all crave appreciation and recognition, and will do almost anything to get it. But nobody wants insincerity. Nobody wants flattery.”*
7. **Give the other person a fine reputation to live up to.** *“If you want to improve a person in a certain respect, act as though that particular trait were already one of his or her outstanding characteristics.”*
8. **Use encouragement. Make the fault seem easy to correct.** *“Be liberal with your encouragement, make the thing seem easy to do, let the other person know that you have faith in his ability to do it, that he has an undeveloped flair for it – and he will practise until the dawn comes in the window in order to excel.”*
9. **Make the other person (as) happy (as possible) about doing what you suggest.** Even when the task is irreparably undesirable. Try the following approach:
 1. Be sincere. Do not promise anything you can’t deliver. Forget about yourself and concentrate on the benefits to the other person.

2. Be clear. Know exactly what you want the other person to do.
3. Be empathetic. Ask yourself what the other person really wants.
4. Consider the benefits the other person will receive from doing what you suggest.
5. Match those benefits to the other person's wants.
6. Convey the request in a form that highlights those benefits.

Extra: How to make the most of the book

I'm including Carnegie's own list of tips for making the most of his book because they're [solid advice for reading](#) and self-improvement in general.

1. **Have a deep desire to learn and a determination to increase your ability to deal with people.**
2. **Review each chapter quickly. Then go back over it thoroughly.**
3. **Stop frequently to reflect and recall.**
4. **Highlight and annotate as you read.**
5. **Reread and review frequently.**
6. **Apply the rules at every opportunity.** See these [Atomic Habits](#) and [Power of Habit](#) summaries.
7. **Make a game of it.** E.g., offer a 1 USD bounty to your friends and family if they catch you breaking its principles.
8. **Conduct a weekly review.** Set aside 30 minutes. Ask yourself, what mistakes did you make? Successes? Lessons? What actions can you take to improve?
9. **Record your small wins.** Write them down, be specific, review them often!

Start as you mean to go on! These points are worth dwelling on and putting into practice.

How to Win Friends and Influence People Summary Contents

***How to Win Friends and Influence People* has 30 main chapters in 4 parts...**

How This Book Was Written – And Why

Nine Suggestions on How to Get the Most Out of This Book

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3. 'He Who Can Do This Has the Whole World with Him. He Who Cannot Walks a Lonely Way'

Part Two: Six Ways to Make People Like You

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1. You Can't Win an Argument
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9. What Everybody Wants
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11. The Movies Do It. TV Does It. Why Don't You Do It?

12. When Nothing Else Works, Try This

Part Four: Be a Leader: How to Change People Without Giving Offence or Arousing Resentment

[Arthur Worsley](#)

I founded **TAoL** to discover and share the best wisdom on how to live long and prosper. Before that I studied Psychology, Philosophy & Physiology at Oxford and consulted at McKinsey. **Still curious?** [Learn more](#) or [take my FREE productivity quiz.](#)