

How to Handle Persuasion ZenFox42

The following is not from the manual, but the result of a forum discussion, and tries to give some guidelines to the GM for handling Persuasion, in a consistent manner that can be explained to the player as to why their Persuasion didn't work. Nobody disagreed with it once I posted this summary.

It does reference the descriptions of the results of a Persuasion roll from the manual, see it for those details.

Persuasion is **not** “I ask them to do *this* and roll Persuasion, and if I'm successful then they will do it”. It’s about changing attitudes (Hostile/Uncooperative/Neutral/Friendly/Helpful) and what someone with that attitude will or won’t do.

1. Any NPC has an initial attitude based on their **job/task/goals, how loyal/committed they are** to that job/task/goal (for whatever reasons), their **accountability** to their boss or peers (will anyone know if they do something they weren’t supposed to do?), and **what's being asked of them** by the player.

- Ex : a loyal secretary would be Hostile to letting you see the boss without an appointment, but a secretary who hates her dishonest boss would be Friendly to the idea.
- Ex : a prison guard is Hostile to letting you escape. He's Uncooperative about letting you sneak extra food out of the kitchen. He's Neutral about your overdue book from the prison library. He's Friendly in talking about football. He's Helpful in getting you a bible since he's religious himself.
- Ex : an experienced robber under orders to rob you (by a boss he fears) would be Hostile to “don’t rob us” but maybe Uncooperative or Neutral to “don’t kill us”. A young, first-time, nervous mugger who picked you at random might even be Neutral to “don’t rob us”.

2. Then the Persuasion roll tells the GM how much to bump up (or down) their attitude. *That’s all it can do.*

3. At that point, given the current attitude, the GM decides where the request falls in the spectrum of “**will gladly do**”, “**might do with incentive**”, and “**will never do**”. The RAW gives guidelines for that, too (especially *how much* “incentive” might be required for each attitude).

The important thing to realize is that there are things that even the most Helpful person will never do - kill someone for you, knowingly give away their life's savings, etc. Even a merchant who's been charmed into being Helpful by a PC isn't going to *give away* his goods, and a vengeful secretary wouldn't (well, ok, might not) give a total stranger access to the company's most secret records. And the farther down the attitude list you go, the more things they're NOT going to do for you. Even a Neutral guard isn't going to let you escape (alho the GM might decide for *this* guard that falls into the “might do with incentive” category because he’s open to bribes).

So if a PC rolls 5 Raises on their Persuasion to ask the guard to please open the cell door and let them go, the response is still “yeah buddy, in your dreams”.

A judge with solid evidence in front of them is Hostile to letting the perp off scot-free, and even making him Neutral (the best a Persuasion roll could do) isn’t going to make him ignore the law, alho *perhaps* he might go easier on the sentencing.

And the “might do with incentive” realm allows for a little simple roleplaying without multiple rolls, where the NPC indicates that they might be more co-operative if they were paid a little coin, and then the players can decide what they want to do...