

Assignment 1: Edit the following paragraph for clarity, conciseness, grammar and spelling errors. Re-type into a Word document, and submit via Blackboard.

Psychologists have identified a number of techniques and tools that are aimed at helping people to persuade others of something. One of these techniques is the “foot-in-the-door” technique. The idea behind the “foot-in-the-door technique” is that if you got someone to do something small for you, they will be more likely to do something bigger for you than if you had started with the request for the bigger thing first. In a pioneering study, researchers went door-to-door and pretended to be members of a non-profit service organization. The researchers asked two groups of people to put a large ugly unattractive sign which said “Drive Carefully” in their front yards. Members of one of the groups of people had been approached previously by different researchers who asked them to perform one of a number of lesser tasks. For example, they were asked to sign a petition which urged politicians to work to get safe driving legislation to make driving safer. Members of the other group of people were being approached by the researchers for the first time. As you might expect, the people who had already expressed a willingness to do the smaller task responded a lot more favorably to the second request than people who had not already been approached on the issue beforehand the week before. Over 55 per cent of those people who had agreed to the initial small request agreed to post the ugly sign, and less than 17 per cent of those who were being approached for the first time agreed to put up the sign. Since this first initial study, other investigators have been examining what kind of initial request is most likely to lead people to complying with the bigger request. Some of the theorists suspect that an initial request only has a real effect on the later request if the initial request changes people’s perceptions about themselves. For example, in the initial study, after complying with the first request, people may have seen themselves as “doers”, out to improve driving in their communities. As a result, the second request did not ask them to change their self-concepts; it just asked them to put their preformed self-concepts as “doers” into action. Psychologists’ work on the “foot-in-the-door” technique has been used very widely by people who want to sell things to others.

Example adapted from Douglas College Learning Center, May 2018.