

Make Them Obey, The Science Of Compliance And Conformity

Description

What Are Compliance And Conformity?

Compliance refers to a specific type of response to a request, namely **submission**. It is broken down in to compliance, in which people change how they act but not how they believe, identification, in which people change their public behavior and beliefs but not when they aren't around the group, internalization, in which people change both public and private behavior and beliefs.

On the other hand **conformity** is when an individual **submits** to **norms** and rules that are typically unspoken. The three types of compliance apply to conformity. Additionally there are two reasons why people conform which we will discuss below in the Psychology section.

The main difference between the two boils down to whether it is spoken or unspoken.

Examples Of Compliance

In Every Day Life

- Your boss asks you to finish a report by the end of the day so you do it.
- The police man tells you to put your hands behind your back so you do it.
- The professor asks you to come to his office so you do it.
- Someone tells you to go vote so you do it.
- A salesperson gets you to buy extra features or bonuses for your car.
- An advertisement for helping starving children comes on and you donate money because it told you to.
- Your parent, spouse, or friend tells you to clean your room and you do it.

In History

- In history empires conquered groups of people and forced them to pay taxes. Just think of the English colonies.
- The mongols conquered much of China in the 13th century and forced them to pay tribute.
- Serial killers like Gary Bowles were caught, forced to submit to the law, and were put to death.

Examples Of Conformity

In Every Day Life

- In every day life you choose to wear clothing outside your house.

- You drive on a certain side of the road.
- You don't go about burning down buildings, and so on.
- You attend birthdays and other family events even without being invited.
- You shake people's hands when you meet.
- You abide by a moral code.
- Following fashion trends.
- Waiting in line for food or entertainment.
- Wedding rings are examples of conformity.
- You have a social media account.
- Your political party membership can be an act of conformity.

In History

- The Japanese culture took on elements of the culture from the United States after world war 2.
- Slaves born into slavery often just complied with their master's wishes.
- Rwanda genocide is an example in history of conformity because soldiers often went beyond their command to murder and take control of the areas, committing other various atrocities.
- German citizens before and during world war 2.

In School

- You sit in rows in a classroom until the bell rings.
- You don't speak when the teacher or another student speaks.
- You don't run into other classrooms screaming while class is in session.
- You wear appropriate attire.

Psychology Of Conformity And Compliance

Psychological conformity is driven by two things. First is **Normative Social Influence**, where a person wants to feel belonging and avoid rejection, and **informational social influence**, where a person conforms to gain knowledge because they think that individual is correct.

A Strategic Note

From a strategic perspective, Robert Greene in the 48 Laws Of Power, [suggests blending in](#) outwardly but internally thinking and acting how you want. People will often punish those they think are unique, appear better than them, or could be a threat to their way of life or position.

However, be careful since outward [compliance](#) might slowly convince you it is correct, not through logical argument, but by just wearing down your resistance slowly. See more on the technique below.

General Techniques

The bottom 5 techniques come from [here](#).

- Gain conformity or compliance by rewarding behavior you want and punishing the one you don't

want. This could be promotions, money rewards, praise, status, gifts, insults, shame, or withdrawal. See this [article](#) for more examples and information on coercive forms of power.

- Foot In The Door Technique – Subject is asked to perform a simple or small action that is difficult to say no to. Then a larger request is presented. They will feel committed to continue helping.
- Reciprocity – This is when people feel obliged to return a favor due to social or moral pressure.
- Ingratiation – If you gain someone’s approval through flattery, appealing to the target, and opinion conformity, they will comply with your request.
- Lowball – Used car salesmen offer a lower price to get people in the door and then find ways to raise it at the last moment.
- Door In The Face – A person makes a large request up front and expects to be rejected. Then a more realistic ask is made.

The 16 Compliance Techniques

These techniques were drawn from the [literature](#) and found to be distinguished as unique from each other. You might notice 5 general ways to group the techniques, **rewarding activity, punishment, expertise, activation of personal commitments, and activation of impersonal commitments.**

1. Promise – If you do x I will give you this reward.
2. Liking – A person will do what you want because you are nice and friendly with them.
3. Pre-Giving – Give the person a reward or gift and say they must act a certain way because of it.
4. Threat – If you don’t do x I will punish you.
5. Aversion Stimulation – I will stop punishing you when you do what I want.
6. Expertise (Positive) – If you get good grades you will get paid more money.
7. Expertise (Negative) – If you don’t get good grades you won’t be able to get a job.
8. Self-Feeling (Positive) – You will feel good for helping.
9. Self-Feeling (Negative) – You will feel terrible if you don’t do something.
10. Altercasting (Positive) – A person who has this good quality will comply.
11. Altercasting (Negative) – Only a person who has a bad quality would not listen.
12. Esteem (Positive) – People will think you are impressive if you do x.
13. Esteem (Negative) – People will think of you worse if you don’t do x.
14. Moral Appeal – If you don’t do x you are a bad person.
15. Altruism – Please do this for me.
16. Debt – You should do x for me because you owe me from past favors.

How To Not Conform To Society

Fighting conformity is difficult. You must first ask yourself **what you have to gain from fighting norms of a group.** Don’t dismiss tradition with out deep thought. Sometimes group norms provide value to the individual or group.

You should then ask yourself what you have to lose by conforming. Compare the two to see which one wins. Remember, to not decide to fight conformity actively usually means to decide in favor of conforming to society because of how humans are wired to respond to social pressure.

Conformity has a sort of **negative connotation** but only in a society focused on or praised for

individualism like the United States. In other countries conformity is seen as the thing to be praised for, and that gives conformity a positive connotation.

How To Fight Conformity

- Practice assertiveness and exposure training. This means pushing yourself slightly beyond what you were comfortable with the day before. In this context, practice doing one of the following techniques.
- Disagree and question people's arguments, assumptions, and typical behavior.
- Display symbols of individuality. This could be your clothing, your speech, your vehicle, or anything else associated with your identity. Try to use symbols to create the perception that you are more powerful or well supported than you are.
- Write in your journal your reasons why you are fighting against social control.
- Attack the thing you disagree with verbally, with actions, and in writing. This could involve ridicule, threats, [debate](#), or holding the enemy accountable for how they violate their own rules. Consider studying [character assassination](#) if it applies in your situation. Remember to try to stay within the law or you might alienate yourself from your already limited social support.
- Read [Rules For Radicals](#). Not only written for liberals, but for any political or social situation if applied correctly.
- Try to change the system through the appropriate social channels. This could mean starting a debate with a group of friends, out competing a coworker for a new position, or running for office.
- Study Street Epistemology and the art of using questions to change people's minds. See our article here on questions.

Examples

- You wear a shirt that protests a current social event.
- You start discussions with your social group about current issues. You ask them to explain their positions and why they hold them. Ask what it would take to get them to change their minds.
- Every day you write your emotional and logical experiences in your journal so you are mentally clear about why you are fighting an instance of conformity.
- You create a social media channel where you post persuasive stories meant to change people's opinions on issues.

Category

1. Manipulation
2. Personal Development
3. Persuasion

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