

# The Ethics of Persuasion

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## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about important ethical considerations related to persuasive speaking. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Ethics of Persuasion
2. TARES Test
3. Fitzpatrick and Gauthier

## 1. Ethics of Persuasion

Not all persuasion is ethical. Persuasion is widely considered unethical if it is for the purpose of personal gain at the expense of others, or for personal gain without the knowledge of the audience.

Furthermore, some methods of persuasion are wholly written off as unethical.

➔ **EXAMPLE Coercion**, brainwashing, and torture are never considered ethical.

Barring any of the persuasive methods that are easily distinguished as unethical (such as torture), the line between ethical and unethical is less clearly demarcated. Ethical persuasion has a series of common characteristics that are missing in unethical persuasion.

Ethical persuasion seeks to achieve the following three goals:

- Explore the other person's viewpoint
- Explain your viewpoint
- Create resolutions

Notably, this approach involves input from the audience and an honest explanation of your viewpoint. If you have questions about the ethics of a persuasive attempt, there are a number of tests that can be done.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Coercion

Use of physical or moral force to compel a person to do something, or to abstain from doing something, thereby depriving that person of the exercise of free will.

## 2. TARES Test

Sherry Baker and David Martinson proposed a five-part TARES test to help guide the PR practitioner to define ethical persuasion.

An ethical persuasive speech must have all of the following components:

- Truthfulness of the message
- Authenticity of the persuader
- Respect for the audience
- Equity of the persuasive appeal

## 3. Fitzpatrick and Gauthier

Fitzpatrick and Gauthier developed a series of questions that must be honestly answered to determine how ethical a pitch is:

- For what purpose is persuasion being employed?
- Toward what choices and with what consequences for individual lives is persuasion being used?
- Does the persuasion in this case contribute to or interfere with the decision-making process for its target audience?



### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that some types of persuasion, such as torture, coercion, and brainwashing, are always unethical. **Ethical persuasion** has three components: the exploration of the other person's viewpoint, the explanation of your viewpoint, and the creation of resolutions. Tests such as the **TARES test** and the **Fitzpatrick and Gauthier test** are used to determine if a persuasion attempt is ethical.

Source: Boundless. "The Ethics of Persuasion." Boundless Communications Boundless, 17 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 22 May. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/persuasive-speaking-14/introduction-to-persuasive-speaking-72/the-ethics-of-persuasion-286-4177/>



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