

THE 48 LAWS OF POWER IN PRACTICE

*The 3 most powerful laws and the
4 indispensable power principles.*

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INTRODUCTION

There's a reason why you opened this book. You know there is, but the chances are you're not entirely comfortable admitting to yourself what it is. It's not because *The 48 Laws of Power* has sold millions of copies or that it's the most-requested book in America's prisons. It's something much more personal than that.

The 48 Laws of Power touches more than a few sensitive spots in our psyches; it forces us to reevaluate our relationships, and to start asking difficult questions about how we've been told society works. Of course, for some people this is simply too disturbing and destabilising. But while they might prefer to remain peacefully asleep at the wheel of their lives, we can face those questions and make real, lasting changes.

Perhaps you want to become a modern Machiavelli. Perhaps you want to escape the daily grind and realise your true potential and your dreams. Or maybe you're just tired of finding yourself the victim of other people's games, tossed about by power-plays that you don't realise are happening until it's too late. Whatever your situation, there's an abundance of knowledge, tactics, psychological insights and illuminating examples to guide you in *The 48 Laws of Power*.

But with 48 Laws to choose from and a strong possibility that any one of them might seem like a radical overhaul of your habits and thought processes, it can all seem overwhelming, impractical, or just outright impossible to put the Laws into practice. And so you put the book on the shelf and fall right back into the same old patterns. But it doesn't have to be that way.

As Robert Greene has said in many interviews, you have to choose the right Law for the right occasion. A single-minded focus on Crushing Your Enemy Totally (Law 15) isn't going to be much use if you're trying to gradually gain influence with someone, and deciding to Use Absence To Increase Respect (Law 16) will be as useful as a chocolate teapot if no one knows who you are yet. Moreover, as Robert himself notes, if you tried to practise all the Laws all the time, you'd also just be 'a horrible ugly person to be around'.

There are also contradictions between the Laws, as careful readers will have noticed. But, again, this is because we must choose and tailor the right Law for the right target and the right occasion: don't take a knife to a gun fight, and don't take a bazooka to a game of chess.

So where should we start? Which Laws should you put into practice first? And which are the most flexible and can therefore be used in almost any situation? So many questions! But help is at hand: this guide will help you take the all-important first steps on the road to Power and give

you the tools you need to develop your own compass, unique to your particular life and circumstances.

And we've distilled this knowledge for you here, along with numerous, strategically-placed quotations from great minds past and present.

As well as reading and re-reading *The 48 Laws of Power* many times for our own personal development, we've spent years discussing, reflecting on, and testing each of the Laws in order to make our podcast series, Exploring The 48 Laws of Power. Andrea used the book to overcome his Autism and truly understand other people for the first time (and can now identify what makes them tick with laser-like precision). While getting his Ph.D in History, Jon used it to successfully navigate the court-like world of Oxford University and to find his way into secret archives in Russia. Along the way, we've also been able to discern the cardinal principles which underlie the Laws, which are just as (or even more) important to understand as the particular Laws you should put into practice first.

This book has two Parts. The first reveals the '3 Most Powerful Laws': the ones which you must master first and on which all the others build. Part II, 'The 4 Indispensable Power Principles', outlines the underlying concepts behind the Laws – the specific rules of thumb and social 'hacks' which explain how the Laws make sense in practice in the present day, rather than on paper, or in historical examples that can seem far removed from our modern lives.

PART

THE 3 MOST POWERFUL LAWS

In choosing The 3 Most Powerful Laws, our selection criteria were simple but decisive:



These Laws are the underlying principles hidden within numerous others. In other words, if you internalise these 3 you'll be well on your way to practising and understanding many more. They will be the touchstones that you can return to whenever things seem to be heading out of control.



These Laws will have the most immediate and visible impact on your life and interactions with other people. When starting any project of self-development, it's important to see immediate results to help strengthen our resolve; these Laws will deliver just that.



At the personal level, these Laws have been the ones we come back to most often in our own lives. They've rapidly become our lodestars, guiding us unerringly through the labyrinthine world of power.

So, without further ado, let's get started!

I.

ALWAYS SAY LESS THAN NECESSARY
(LAW 3)



When we meet other people, we want to impress – to excite their interest and curry their favour. Or we want to project an image, perhaps to intimidate and thereby impose our will. But how do we cultivate these impressions quickly and effectively? As Robert emphasises, we must hint and allude rather than be crude and direct; we must embody a sense of mystery, causing people to want to know more about us and be wary of trying to control us.

The less you say, the more people will fill in the blanks, but (and this can seem counterintuitive) they'll almost always do so to your advantage. Of course, this relies on you being selective in what you do say: if you only reveal negative or uninteresting details about yourself, people will automatically fill in more of the same. But if you merely hint at exciting projects, great achievement or expertise, they'll assume you're being modest and that the real story is 10 times more impressive. You don't need to '10X' everything; let your audience do it for you.

This is the art of the gentle smile when someone says 'Wow, that sounds really cool', or 'You must be doing really well for yourself'. The smile can mean whatever they want it to mean; talk is cheap, but the imagination is priceless.

The dangers of saying too much cannot be exaggerated. Oversharing is both burdensome to other people and it makes you appear more ordinary and unimpressive. A pithy phrase or incisive comment is infinitely more powerful in getting both attention and being treated with respect. Filling the silence with verbiage only makes you appear insecure and vacuous, so practise holding both your nerve and your tongue.

*‘Those who know do not
speak. Those who speak
do not know’*



LAO TZU

The key to observing this Law is to practise not reacting to things in the moment they happen. Instead of jumping into your familiar routines, pause. Reflect on the situation you're in. Try to dispassionately assess what's going on and do not immediately leap to justify, explain or promote yourself. This pause is the true space where both power and wisdom are cultivated. If you've wondered why the most successful and insightful people have a meditation practice, it's because meditation helps to create this space between your emotional responses arising and you actually taking action. You gain poise, perspective, and, thereby, a great deal of power to decide how to act rather than merely to react to other people.

Reacting emotionally – which is like reacting on autopilot, blind to the specific qualities of the moment – is a recipe for disaster. You must remain above the fray of your own insecurities, not indulging in displays of wounded pride or the urge to show off.

Part of this is restraining the urge most of us feel to appear significant in the eyes of others, especially if they're people we want to befriend personally or professionally. But you can't force this effect; on the contrary, the more you grasp for it, the further it recedes. Like so many of the Laws, you should think of this as a kind of seduction. You don't attract another person by talking endlessly about yourself or by over-sharing your insecurities when you first meet. Instead, you play. You're both in a

dance – synchronising with each other's movements and remaining open to creative possibilities.

Saying less than necessary also buys you time – the most precious commodity of all. We need time to assess who we're talking to (crucial for Laws 10, 13, 19, 32, 33, among others), to understand where they're coming from, and how we can best interact with them. Becoming relaxed with a slower pace of conversation also means you won't be rushed; you subtly take control of the situation by setting the rhythm, which others will either instinctively try to match, or they will unconsciously feel they're on the back-foot.

*Listen to many, speak
to few'*



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The less you speak, the more you can and should listen. As Robert points out in Law 29 (Plan To The End), ‘So much of power is not what you do but what you do not do’ – if you commit yourself too soon, you quickly forfeit control and autonomy; everyone knows the path you’re on and can predict your movements (recall Law 20: Do Not Commit To Anyone). The wisest leaders listen carefully to their advisors – the experts in their respective fields – before making a decision. Louis XIV was the master of this, remaining ungraspable and unpredictable to his subordinates, as Robert tells us. But the same is true of the great boardroom leaders, fashion icons and technology trend-setters of today.

Calibrate yourself to the world and people around you, but never become predictable and mundane. You cannot Create Compelling Spectacles (Law 37) if you do not know what will seem compelling to your audience. And nor can you Discover Each Man’s Thumbscrew (Law 33) if you don’t listen out for his vices and insecurities. In this and countless other instances, saying less than necessary and listening to what is and is not said are habits that can’t fail to help you in practising the Laws effectively.

Understanding other people’s emotional needs is the secret to Power (see below), but cultivating a sharp awareness of your own emotions is just as important in this game. If you wear your hopes, fears and needs on your sleeve, you become unattractive and a burden to other people. More importantly, you also become easily ma-

nipulated by them. So, keep those hopes and fears to yourself when playing with Power: do not lean on others lest they throw you unceremoniously into the mud. Instead, through silence, listening and the art of allusion, you can rapidly get to a situation where they'll happily take you up on their shoulders.