

Preparing the Ground — Worksheet

A companion to Robert Cialdini's Pre-Suasion. What you make someone notice right before you ask often matters more than the ask itself. This sheet helps you set an honest frame — bring your strongest true case to the moment it can actually be heard. The line never moves: prepare the ground for a true case, never a false one.

The two ideas, and the one rule

Channeled attention: whatever you make someone notice right before a decision becomes, for that moment, the most important thing to them. Privileged moments: the brief openings when a person is more receptive. Your job is to recognize those moments and bring your strongest true case to them — never to manufacture a false readiness. If your setup only works by hiding, rushing, or misdirecting, you have crossed from pre-suasion into manipulation. Throw it out and start again from what is true.

Build your pre-suasive setup

The ask, named plainly

Write the one thing you want the room to decide, in plain words. This is the destination; everything below is the honest road to it.

The true thing to put first — pairs with The Public Comment

The one image, person, street, or specific harm you will name before the policy. Order matters as much as content — lead with the child, not the clause.

The receptive moment — pairs with Pre-Suasion in Practice

When is the room actually listening — the agenda item, the pause after a question, the beat after your story lands? Name the moment you will wait for. Do not force it.

The one-sentence bridge

The single sentence you will say right before the ask that makes it feel like the obvious next step rather than a demand out of nowhere. Draft it here.

The honesty check — every setup passes all five

The thing you put first is true, and you would put it first even if the room could see your whole plan.

You are directing attention to something real — not hiding what matters or rushing a decision.

The person would still say yes if they saw everything you know.

You are bringing your case to a genuinely receptive moment, not manufacturing a false one.

You could describe your setup out loud, in the room, and not be ashamed. If not, rewrite it.

This week's one move — the two-sentence drill

Sentence 1 — the setup

The true thing you will say right before the ask.

Sentence 2 — the ask

The ask itself, in one clear sentence.

Say them out loud, in order

Does the setup make the ask land softer and truer? If it only works by hiding something, throw it out — that is the line.

The room

Which meeting will you try this in this week?