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## **Top 10 Hardball Tactics**

Hard-bargaining tactics come in different flavors, designed to throw you off your game. Harvard Law School professor Robert Mnookin and his colleagues asked lawyers and business people to list the most common difficult tactics they encountered in negotiation. Based on their responses, here is the list of the Top 10 hardball tactics used against them:

1. **Extreme demands (or offers) followed by small, slow concessions.** This is to “anchor” your expectations. Counter this by knowing your own target, reservation point, and alternatives.
2. **Commitment tactics.** Your opponent claims his hands are tied, or has limited discretion. Be skeptical. Counter this by asking questions to test whether the commitment tactics are real.
3. **Take-it-or-leave-it offers.** It’s best to ignore the tactic. Remind them that offers are always negotiable. Focus on the content of their offer and respond with your own counteroffer.
4. **Inviting unreciprocated offers.** Don’t bid against yourself. Wait for a counteroffer before reducing your demand (or increasing your offer).
5. **Trying to make you flinch.** Your opponent keeps making demands, waiting for you to reach your breaking point. Don’t fall for it. Be clear that “nibbling” won’t get them free concessions.
6. **Personal insults and feather ruffling.** This is a strategy to play on your insecurities and gain a psychological advantage. If you become flustered, take a break, change the pace, or name their tactics.
7. **Bluffing, puffing, and lying.** Exaggerating and misrepresenting facts can throw you off guard. Be polite, but skeptical.
8. **Threats and warnings.** Promises of drastic consequences if demands are not met should be called out as the non-productive, futile tactics they are.
9. **Belittling your alternatives.** Know your best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA) and don’t let your opponent shake your resolve.
10. **Good cop, bad cop.** In a two-negotiator team, one opponent is reasonable, the other is tough. Recognize that they are working together. Find your own bad cop if you need one.

Knowing these tactics and understanding the motives behind them will help you to defuse these challenges, and keep the focus on your goals.