

# Verbal Dominance: 10 Ways to Speak With Confidence

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Whether you want to be dominant in conversations, or simply learn to speak with more confidence, there is good news:

You can learn that.

This article will show you to speak with confidence and power.Â Â

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## #1. Lead The Conversation

How to lead a conversation?

Well, there are a few key variables to control a conversation, and dominant individuals heavily influence all of them:

- **Tempo**Â

- **Tone** (happy, sad, serious etc.)
- **Subject** (what to talk about)
- **Who speaks** (who speaks and for how long)

Keep in mind these dynamics don't always apply to all groups.

In [group conversations](#) the dynamics might change.

You can sometimes have jesters and loudmouths who clamor for people's attention. And in those cases, the socially powerful man might simply call himself out of the conversation. Or he might focus on one or two persons and start a side conversation with them.

## 1.2. Dictate the Tempo

Dominant individuals want to be on top of the important things.

They don't delegate the important stuff: they want to be sure *they* understand it, so *they* can make decisions.

So they control the speed of the interaction to make sure that they both understand the topic, and that they don't waste their valuable time.

The most obvious examples of managing the tempo [are from interviewers](#), who need to manage the tempo to keep the conversation engaging (the interviewer there goes overboard as he does it 3 times in 20 seconds with [Nassim Taleb](#), but exaggerated examples can be good to learn the concept).

If it's a group, socially powerful, and socially intelligent leaders make sure everyone is on the same page, everyone is participating and everyone is enjoying the conversation.

If there is someone who is hogging the conversation and boring the group, they will intervene to cut the attention where short (for a few examples see "[group conversation](#)").

Other expressions of controlling the tempo even more directly include:

**Socially Powerful:** Go ahead

**Socially Powerful:** Wait a second

**Socially Powerful:** Let's hear Mark here what he thinks

**Socially Powerful:** Slow down, you're going too quick

## 1.2. Impose The Frame

In Power University we explain that some frames are "socially held".

Such as, culture and society frame certain topics in a certain way. And people who adopt those frames have an easier time to dominate the frame and, potentially, shame others.

This is the game that [SJW and virtual signalers](#) play. They align with the majority, so they can win and gain status by oppressing the minority of dissenters (see: [fighting against moral policing](#)).

Dominant men [hold the frame](#) of what's right, what's fair, and what's "normal" or not normal to do. And the more power they have as individuals, the more they can go against the grain of social frames, groups and cultural diktats.

An example from Horrible Bosses:

[Drinking at 8:15 in the morning is not normal, but his rank and social power manage to impose on the](#)

[more submissive man his new normality.](#)

Kevin Spacey in the above example has so much power in that environment, and he maintains his frame so strongly, that he can “buck the frame”.

This is something you want to keep in mind if you live a life that goes against what’s considered “normal”.

## 1.3. Ask The Questions

A question I am often asked is: is it more dominant to ask questions?

Well, it depends on the circumstances. But, in general, it’s more powerful to ask questions and have others reply.

When the conversation is 1:1, more often than not, the dominant person is the one who makes questions and asks for clarifications.

Dominant individuals ask the questions, and the submissive individuals reply.

When the domination/submission dynamic is very pronounced the submissive party will also be nervous while providing the answers.

This dynamic is replicated in seduction as well.

Here is an example from The Saint:

Also see:

- [Dominance in seduction](#)
- [Leadership in seduction](#)

When dominant individuals answer questions, they take more freedom instead.

They choose whether to answer the question, or whether to change the social dynamics as they see fit (see “[frame control techniques](#)”). Their answers are less about answering questions and more about what they *choose* to talk about.

## 1.4. Correct People’s Mistakes

Corrections are a form of attack on authority, which makes it a potential power move.

Corrections increase the authority and credibility of the person making the correction while decreasing the authority of the individual being corrected.

That’s why submissive people often avoid correcting others: they are afraid of taking a strong social stand.

### **Dating Power Move**

Correcting people is also a sign of intellectual dominance that can be used very effectively in dating. See [Power University](#) for an example.

## 1.5. Contradict People When You Disagree

Similar to correcting, but packing an even bigger punch, is to contradict people by saying the exact opposite of what they just said.

Here is an example from Meet the Parents:

### **Real Life Check:**

Don't use this one too much. Yes it's dominant and socially powerful, but it's also a huge [rapport breaker](#) and it's the most socially unaware people who contradict others.

The more socially smart individuals say "yes" and then redirect the conversation towards the right answer.

## **1.5. Sum Up the Conversation**

A dead giveaway of who's the leader in a conversation is who sums up the discussion.

Whenever you want to take a step forward and advance your leadership, always sum up what's been said and people will look at you like you're the de-facto leader.

## **#2. Be Assertive**

Socially powerful individuals expect to be heard.

And they expect that their rights to speak will be upheld while they also make sure they can understand what you are saying -if they want to-.

They are also not easy to hush and they won't buckle down if you pressure them.

## **2.1. Make Sure They Got Your Point**

Dominant individuals will make sure their subordinates understand.

They will ask "did you get it?" or "everything clear?"

In the most extreme situations, they will tell them to repeat. As in this example from Pulp Fiction:

## **2.2. Expect a Reply**

Sometimes in social exchanges, people will try to avoid answering a question.

Dominant men will make it clear when they don't appreciate it, and they might keep questioning with the attitude of the person who *expects* an answer.

That attitude is an example of "[dominant frame](#)" by imposing one's own expectations.

A great technique you can use is to simply repeat your question with the tone of the person who expects a reply.

See an example from Jackie brown:

**Jackie:** well, thanks, I got one now

**Him:** you went out this morning and bought a gun?

**Jackie:** well, let's say I got one, OK?

**Him:** (ignores) somebody loaned it to you?

(she replies)

If at her first refusal to answer he had laughed uncomfortably, he would have admitted she's the dominant

one. Instead, he keeps inquiring as if the were the most normal thing in the world.  
Very powerful.

## 2.3. Repeat the Message Until It's Accepted

Theresa May doing something similar to the video example above.

Just instead of questions, we are now talking about uses statements.

Imagine you are delivering a speech and the crowd gets too noisy.

If you stop your speech, you lose power. Why? because you communicate that their noises are as important as your speech, and that your power as the speaker, and your right to speak, is in question.

Look How May handles it instead.

By repeating her statement, she communicates something like this: “you can laugh as much as you want, but you gotta listen to me because I’m the authority”:

*“to what’s been said in this chamber and out of it”, as her voice raises on the repetition, she is conveying power and disapproval with her assertive tonality and inflection.*

*Also notice it was very, very good of her not to acknowledge the jeering in any shape or form, not even with her facial expressions.*

## #3. Be Aggressive (when needed)

The dark side of dominance is the ability -and willingness- to punish others.

## 3.1. Speak Over Others

Dominant and aggressive individuals will trample your right of speech if you let them to.

If you saw any of [Trump’s debates](#), it’s shocking how many times he blatantly interrupted, spoke over, or simply just robbed opponents of their right to speak.

And whenever others fought him, he won almost all the times -if not all the times-.

Here is an example with Jeb Bush:

*Jeb Bush, like pretty much everyone else, was simply unprepared to deal with Trump at his level of dominance, aggression, and [Machiavellianism](#).*

*He makes a litany of mistakes.*

*Not only he allows Trump to win, but he turns towards him with a smile, communicating that Trump is the real leader of the pack.*

*Trump caps it all off telling him “go ahead”, and Bush starts speaking on cue like a puppet on a string.*

## 3.2. Cut People Off

Similar to speaking over people, but even more powerful as the submissive party simply accepts it, thus confirming that he is the real authority.

In this scene from Platoon:

### Real Life Check:

As a general rule, void both 3.1 and 3.2. unless you have been aggressed first.

### 3.3. Push Others on The Defensive

This is one of the critical dimensions for learning and understanding [the basics of frame control](#).

Whenever there is an argument, look at who's attacking and who's defending.

The person attacking is the dominant one, and the one defending is the submissive one.

This is an example with a shame attack:

The interviewer is being dominant by not accepting any of Julien's rebuttals and pushing Julien to defend only. Julien would like to counteract but ends up only defending without really ever making his point (he is also nervous, understandably).

#### **Beating Shame Attacks:**

Don't just defend.

Instead, either defend and counterattack, a typical politician's approach to debating, or attack back right away by reframing the topic or refusing their frame.

We will see examples going forward.

### 3.4. Ignore What Others Say

Ignoring is a way of showing dominance through (slight) disrespect.

You will see most often when submissive individuals make a mistake or get into a topic that the leader doesn't like.

An example from Beautiful Girls:

By starting with "so what do you do" Matt Dillon ignores the previous topic and gives the impression he is starting the conversation from scratch. But since the red-headed had already started the conversation, Dillon is lowering his status and showing himself as the dominant man of the group.Â

#### **Real Life Check: This is very useful**

Knowing when to ignore people and remarks is a skill you must develop. It's powerful and high quality while at the same time avoiding escalations and unneeded time-wasting.

### 3.5. Criticize & Judge Others Harshly

Judgmental aggression mixes aggression with [judge powers](#).

Example from Trump:

That's dark power, but it's high octane power nonetheless.

Look at it very well. The pauses, the power and anger in his voice, the hand gestures and, in the end, his judgmental head shaking.

He looks authoritative, strong and, given his conviction, even right.

People tend to side with authority and power. Many people who have no idea of what happened will laugh and side with Trump.

Good or bad, that's the world we live in.

**Note:** Trump's little mistake

When he says “I watch you a lot”, that’s where he lost power though.

Why?

By now you can start guessing why: it’s because he shows a lot of investment in them. He spends lots of effort to keep up with them. He is basically admitting that they are a high priority for him (and they get under his skin).

### 3.6. Make’Em Squeak With Social Pressure

Social pressure is not necessarily rude or intimidating.

However, it does leverage a certain fear or at least some discomfort from the submissive party.

An example from Meet The Parents, a great movie to learn power dynamics:

De Niro’s questions are strong and direct. Stiller makes a joke to relieve some pressure but instead of accepting the release of pressure -a friendly move- De Niro keeps piling pressure on, culminating with “but you didn’t pick it”.

Now if Stiller wanted to be equally dominant, here is how he could have done it:

**De Niro:** They say geniuses pick green.... But you didn’t pick it

**Stiller:** “They” say it? Who says it

Here he would be questioning his authority and forcing him to explain. Then he could have delivered his dominant coup de grace by taking the judging position and ending with “hmmm I’m not convinced.

Anyway... “.

If he wanted to be even more direct and aggressive:

**De Niro:** They say geniuses pick green.... But you didn’t pick it

**Stiller:** Not really, I’ve heard boring people pick green

And this is a powerful yet polite way of handling it:

**De Niro:** They say geniuses pick green.... But you didn’t pick it

**Stiller:** I don’t know about that Jack. It’s just a nice color as far as I’m concerned. And it fits well with your lovely garden too (smiles ). Shall we go in now guys

### #4. Never Submit

Dominant men avoid expressions of submission.

Makes sense, no?

They avoid submitting to other people’s tempo. They avoid defending themselves, they reject contradiction and corrections, and, finally, they approach questions differently than non-dominant men.

### 4.1. Answer With What *You* Want to Answer

Remember that answering questions put you in the submissive position?

Well, here is how dominant men avoid to fully commit to answering questions:

1. Don’t answer with everything there is to say
2. Say something, then ask a question back

3. Only address a bit of the question, then talk about what inspires you

Here is an example from the intellectually dominant Aleksandr in Sex and The City:

*If she wanted to be less submissive, she could have insisted in a socially smart way. For example: “very nice, I liked that. But you must remember something more.. how did you feel there, was it a good time?”*

Also observe Aleksandr for the whole scene, very socially powerful with his facial expression and social-pressure inducing silences (albeit he is a bit emotionally distant).

Aleksandr comes across as socially powerful and intellectually dominant (which is even more important for an older man, who is expected to be intellectually dominant)

#### **Note: Senate hearings are tough**

This is why it’s difficult, extremely difficult, to be dominant and socially powerful at a Senate hearing or at an interrogation.

Being the one grilled, forced to reply and forced to stick to what people want you to answer, it’s extremely difficult coming across as socially powerful.

## **4.2. Don’t Follow Their Lead (Presupposition Answering)**

This is very socially smart and shows high-level social skills.

It consists of answering in a way which presupposes yes or no *instead* of saying yes or no.

Here is a great example from Jackie Brown:

*Saying “no” would have followed her lead while decreasing his value -admitting of not being a well traveled man- and would have put an end to the conversation.*

*The way he answers instead presupposes the “no”, but presents himself a strong independent man who doesn’t follow her lead. Plus it allows the conversation to continue.*

*(too bad for the ending).*

Here is another example from the Hedge of Tomorrow:

*Notice the general does not reply with “yes”.*

*Replying with “yes” would have elevated Cruise’s question to a level where it “deserves” to be properly addressed.*

*That would entail a respectful conversation of two people who are nearly at the same level.*

*Instead, he raises his voice and makes his point, which shows a slight disdain for Cruise’s question and communicates that he is not up for a conversation between equals.*

## **4.2. Block All Attempts at Soft Power**

Social power often requires you to “see” the social dynamics and avoiding people to take a [soft power position](#) over you.

This is exactly where this website will help.

Here are two ways to avoid people from pushing you on the defensive with the judge role:

## **#5. Use Fewer Words**

Remember the [law of social effort](#)?



It applies to verbal production as well, of course.

Socially powerful men, on average, speak less.

And when they speak, they say something important that people will listen to.

## 5.1. Use Pregnant Pauses

Fearful people speak quickly.

As if they cannot stand being at the center of attention.

Speaking quickly also signals they're afraid someone will steal their speaking time.

Powerful people instead speak slowly and use lots of pauses.

Olivia Cabane in [The Charisma Myth](#) recommends people who want to look powerful and charismatic to wait 2 seconds before replying.

Here is possibly the most famous example of pregnant pauses:

## 5.2. Wield Social Pressure With Silences

One of the most powerful ways of exerting dominance is by actually *removing* words in a way that puts social pressure on people.

Di Caprio does it in this scene from *Wolf of Wall Street*.

He puts pressure on the banker to answer his question and gets down to business through pure silence.

However, my by far favorite example of the power of silence is in *Casino*.

Both of these examples convey final authority without words.

## Use Dominant Expressions

Here are more expressions of social power.

For brevity I only list the words, for examples and ways to deal with them, check Power University:

- (Yo) ***listen*** (to me)
- ***I didn't understand anything, tell me again***
- ***What did you just say***
- ***That's right***
- ***No! It's not like that at all!***
- ***Wrong!***
- ***And you think there is nothing wrong with that?***
- ***Alright?*** (as if to say "did you get it?" or "done, now we move on")
- ***No, answer my question***
- ***Sorry, I don't wanna hear about it right now***
- ***Tell me something more interesting***
- ***Shut up! Silence! Quiet!***
- ***Facts and numbers say it***

The last one is important.

In debates, rationality and science convey power and authority and are often what makes the difference

between losing or winning a debate.

Trump lost two exchanges in a row because the journalists managed to take the rational high ground on him:

## Learn More

- [Dominant body language](#)
- [Submissive body language](#)
- [Submissive expressions](#) you must avoid

This is an excerpt from [Power University](#).

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