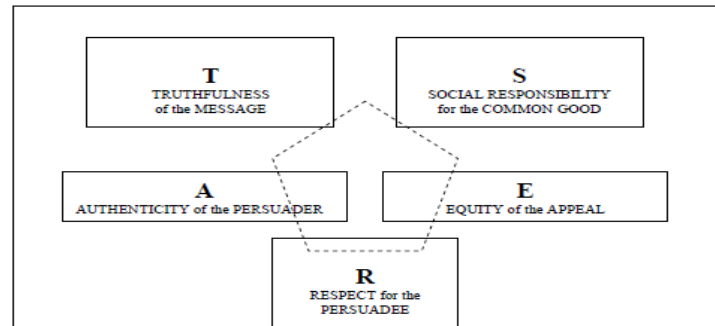


The TARES Test: Five Principles for Ethical Persuasion

What is the TARES test?

It's a five-point test for what the authors call *ethical persuasion*. Published by Sherry Baker and David L Martinson, the TARES test seeks to establish robust principles for ethics and support the creation of a more ethical approach to persuasion, particularly commercial persuasion such as takes place in the marketing process.



The TARES test consists of five principles: truthfulness, authenticity, respect, equity and social responsibility. The authors offer checklists of questions for each of the five principles that help the marketer explore their implications.

The TARES test can be particularly relevant to political commercials but keep in mind you'll be using it as a member of the audience rather than as the marketer, for whom it was intended. In other words, those who *write* political commercials *should* be using the TARES test. Since they obviously don't, the audience will have to use it.

Truthfulness (of the message) examples

- Is this communication factually accurate and true? Does it lead people to believe what I myself do not believe?
- Has this appeal downplayed relevant evidence?

Authenticity (of the persuader) examples

- Does this action compromise my integrity?
- Do I feel good about being involved in this action?
- Do I truly think and believe the persuadees will benefit?

Respect (for the persuadee) examples

- Is the appeal made to persuadees as rational, self-determining human beings?
- Does this action promote raw self-interest at the unfair expense of or to the detriment of persuadees?

Equity (of the persuasive appeal) examples

- Am I doing to others what I would not want done to me or to people I care about?
- Do the persuadees know they are being persuaded rather than informed?

Social Responsibility (for the common good) examples

- Does this action take responsibility to promote and create the kind of world and society in which persuaders themselves would like to live with their families and loved ones?
- Have I unfairly stereotyped society's constituent groups in this promotion or communications campaign?

Table 1
Truthfulness (of the Message)

<p>Is this communication factually accurate and true, and also truthful? Does it deceive others either overtly or covertly? Does it lead people to believe what I myself do not believe? (Bok, 1989, p. 13)</p> <p>Is this communication consistent with open, sincere, and honest communication? Is it responsive to the persuadees' human need to have truthful information to inform their life decisions?</p>	<p>Has this appeal downplayed relevant evidence? (Cooper & Kelleher, 2000)</p> <p>If this message communicates only part of the truth, what are my justifications for disseminating this selective (incomplete) truth? Are my omissions meant to deceive? (Deaver, 1990, pp. 168–177)</p>
<p>Would I feel that this communication was truthful and nondeceptive if communicated to me in this context?</p>	<p>Am I creating a false image or a false impression with selective information? Will the people receiving this message feel they have been deceived if later they learn the whole truth?</p>
<p>Is this communication substantially complete? Does it satisfy a reasonable person's requirements for information in this situation? (Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1987, p. 35)</p> <p>Have comparisons between alternatives been presented in an undistorted and truthful manner? (Cooper & Kelleher, 2000)</p>	<p>Is the information withheld needed by the audience for their own choices and actions? Will not having this information result in any harm? (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2000)</p> <p>Will people have reason to question my honesty and trustworthiness as a result of this communication?</p> <p>What can I do to ensure that this persuasive message is truthful?</p>

Table 2
Authenticity (of the Persuader)

<p>Does this action compromise my integrity? Does it conform to my highest principles? Is it true to my best self? Does it conform to my religious convictions?</p>	<p>What is the rule or maxim on which I am acting? Is this rule justifiable? Would I want others to follow the same rule in similar circumstances?</p>
<p>Does this action arise out of noble intentions and motivations? (Cunningham, 2000.) Although I may have the right to do this, is it the right thing to do?</p>	<p>Would I ideally want to live in a world in which people routinely engaged in this type of action? If not, what is my justification for engaging in it myself?</p>
<p>Do I personally believe in this product, company, service, event, idea, cause? Can I support and advocate it wholeheartedly and in person, including to people I know and love?</p>	<p>What good reasons and justifications do I have for advocating this product, service, or cause (other than purely self-serving reasons)?</p>
<p>Would I openly, publically and personally be an advocate for this cause? Or am I hiding behind the anonymity of a promotional campaign or the work of others?</p>	<p>By engaging in this action, am I cooperating with evil or encouraging or requiring others to do so? (Martinson, 1999, pp. 120–122.)</p>
<p>Do I feel good about being involved in this action? How will I feel if others find out about my participation? Am I willing to take full, open, public, and personal responsibility for this action? (Waltz, 1999, pp. 127–128.)</p>	<p>Does this action properly and appropriately (without hurting others) balance my loyalties in this situation to self and conscience, employer, society, humanity, clients, supporters, stockholders, profession and professional colleagues, family, friends, and others who have treated me well?</p> <p>Have I pursued a moral ideal with integrity, despite the behavior of others in society or with whom I work? Am I taking appropriate responsibility for the moral conduct of the organizations with which I work? (Raper, 1999, pp. 123–125.)</p>
<p>Do I truly think and believe that the persuadees will benefit (or will be doing the right thing) if they are persuaded to act or think in the ways that this persuasive communication suggests they should?</p>	
<p>Is the motive of my action or communication (or of the secret I am keeping) to hurt, deceive, manipulate, or use others merely for my own or my client's purposes (to the detriment and at the expense of the persuadees)?</p>	<p>What can I do to conduct myself as an authentic person in this situation?</p>

Table 3
Respect (for the Persuadee)

Is the persuasive appeal made to the decency in people? Have I respected the receivers of this persuasive message by appealing to their higher inclinations and their basic goodness, by not pandering, exploiting, or appealing to their lower or baser inclinations?	Does this action or communication respect the persuadee as a human being worthy of dignity and respect? Have I taken the rights, interests, and well-being of others into consideration as much as my own?
Is the persuasive appeal made to persuadees as rational, self-determining beings? Does it facilitate persuadees' capacity to reflect and to make responsible choices about their lives?	Is the quality of this information adequate to the information needs of the persuadees? Does this persuasive message facilitate the persuadees' capacity to act well (i.e., to choose, speak, vote, or purchase well)? (Cunningham, 2000)
Does this action conform to my own religious convictions, and to religious perspectives that people should act with a spirit of caretaking and loving kindness toward others (Christians, Fackler, & Rotzoll, 1995, p. 19).	Will the persuadees benefit (will they be doing the right thing for themselves and others) if they are persuaded to act or think in the ways that this communication suggests they should?
What ethical responsibility do I have for the people I am targeting with this persuasion?	Does this action promote raw self-interest at the unfair expense of or to the detriment of persuadees?
What can I do to be more respectful of and more responsible to the people I am persuading, and all others who will be affected by this persuasion?	Does this persuasive appeal contribute to understanding, consideration, reflection, and valid reasoning, and facilitate informed, free-will assent and consent? (Cunningham, 2000)

Table 4
Equity (of the Persuasive Appeal)

Is the context, nature and execution of this persuasive act fair? Is the power of persuasion used fairly and justly?	Is there parity in this situation between the persuader and persuadee in terms of information, understanding, insight, capacity, and experience? If not, have accommodations been made to adjust equitably for the disparities and to level the playing field?
Would I feel that the persuasion in this situation was fair, just, ethical and appropriate if it were communicated to me or to people I know and love? Am I doing to others what I would not want done to me or to people I care about?	Do persuadees understand what I am claiming my product/service/ company/ position is and can do? Are they able to assess these claims fully and rationally? Do they thoroughly understand the costs and potential harms to themselves and others of what I am advocating?
Is this a persuasion that should not be made, considering the persons and circumstances involved?	Is this persuasive appeal sensitive to the needs, interests, concerns, and sensibilities of the persuadees? (Cooper and Kelleher, 2000.)
Have I unfairly targeted specific (or vulnerable) audiences and made claims outside of their ability to understand the context and underlying claims of the communication? (Patterson & Wilkins, 1998, p. 63.)	Does it allow for both reflection and counterargument? (Wilkins and Christians, 2000.)
Do the receivers of the message know that they are being persuaded rather than informed?	What can I do to make this persuasive appeal more fair and equitable?
Has this persuasion taken unfair advantage of a power differential? (Gauthier, 2000)	

Table 5
Social Responsibility (for the Common Good)

<p>Does this action recognize the interdependency of persons in society, of persons as communal beings? (Christians et. al., 1995, p. 332) Is the action/ communication responsible to individuals, society, the public, and the public interest?</p>	<p>Does this action take responsibility to promote and create the kind of world and society in which persuaders themselves would like to live with their families and loved ones? (Baker, 1999)</p>
<p>Will the product or issue I am promoting cause harm to individuals or to society? Does this action conform to the ethical requirement to do no unnecessary harm or to prevent harm?</p>	<p>Have I legitimately and fairly participated in the marketplace of ideas such that competing ideas fairly can be heard and considered by the public? Have I considered the responsibility to fairly represent issues and to allow and foster public consideration of alternative views? (Moyers, 1999)</p>
<p>Has this action's potential negative impact on individuals and the common good been taken into account and responded to appropriately?</p>	<p>Have I taken seriously the challenge of defining how I can positively serve the interests and views of the traditionally underrepresented in society? (Martinson, 1998, p. 148)</p>
<p>Does this persuasive communication promote (or strain) understanding and cooperation among constituent groups of society? Does it enhance or deplete public trust? (Bok, 1989, p. 26)</p>	<p>Have I unfairly stereotyped constituent groups of society in this promotion/ communication campaign?</p>
<p>Will this action (or not having this information) cause disproportionate harm to any person, group, or interest? (Fitzpatrick & Gauthier, 2000)</p>	<p>Does this persuasive communication elucidate issues, dispel confusion and ignorance, and encourage public dialogue based on truthful information? (Cunningham, 2000)</p>