Describe the main features of negotiations

1. Interests. [Interests](http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/mediation/mediation-focus-on-interests-not-rights/) are “the fundamental drivers of negotiation,” according to Patton—our basic needs, wants, and motivations. Often hidden and unspoken, our interests nonetheless guide what we do and say. Experienced negotiators probe their counterparts’ stated positions to better understand their underlying interests.
2. Legitimacy. The quest for a legitimate, or fair, deal drives many of our decisions in negotiations. If you feel the other party is taking advantage of you, you are likely to reject their offer, even if it would leave you objectively better off. To succeed in negotiation, we need to put forth proposals that others will view as[legitimate and fair](http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/negotiation-skills-daily/being-fair-and-getting-what-you-want/).
3. Relationships. Whether you have an ongoing connection with a counterpart or don’t think you’ll ever see her again, you need to effectively [manage your relationship](http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/negotiation-training-daily/negotiate-relationships/) as your negotiation unfolds. Relationship dynamics become all the more important when you have an ongoing connection: future business, your reputation, and your relationships with others may hang in the balance. You can strengthen the relationship by taking time to build rapport and by meeting your own high ethical standards throughout the process.
4. Alternatives and BATNA. Even as we take part in negotiations, we are aware of our alternatives away from the table—what we will do if the current deal doesn’t pan out. Negotiation preparation should include an analysis of your [BATNA, or best alternative to a negotiated agreement](http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/batna/translate-your-batna-to-the-current-deal/), according to Getting to Yes. For example, a job candidate may determine that she will start applying to grad schools if a particular job negotiation falls apart.
5. Options. In negotiations, [options](http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/negotiation-skills-daily/keeping-your-options-alive/) refer to any available choices parties might consider to satisfy their interests, including conditions, contingencies, and trades. Because options tend to capitalize on parties’ similarities and differences, they can create value in negotiation and improve parties’ satisfaction, according to Patton.
6. Commitments. In negotiations, [a commitment](http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/negotiation-skills-daily/too-much-commitment/) can be defined as an agreement, demand, offer, or promise made by one or more party. A commitment can range from an agreement to meet at a particular time and place to a formal proposal to a signed contract.
7. Communication. Whether you are [negotiating online](http://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/conflict-resolution/the-challenges-of-online-negotiations/), via phone, or in person, you will take part in a communication process with the other party or parties. The success of your negotiation can hinge on your communication choices, such as whether you threaten or acquiesce, brainstorm jointly or make firm demands, make silent assumptions about interests or ask questions to probe them more deeply.