

The 48 Laws of Power - Cheatsheet

1. Never outshine the master

Make your superiors feel superior. If you make them insecure, they'll undermine you.

2. Never put too much trust in friends, learn how to use enemies

Friends can betray out of emotion. Enemies have more to prove.

3. Conceal your intentions

Keep people guessing. Don't reveal your plans too soon.

4. Always say less than necessary

Power is strengthened by mystery. Speak economically.

5. So much depends on reputation - guard it with your life

Reputation is a cornerstone of power. Protect and build it.

6. Court attention at all costs

Be visible and stand out. Obscurity is weakness.

7. Get others to do the work for you, but always take the credit

Use others' skills and effort to elevate yourself.

8. Make other people come to you - use bait if necessary

Control the terms of engagement by drawing others in.

9. Win through your actions, never through argument

Convince with results, not words.

10. Infection: avoid the unhappy and unlucky

Negativity is contagious. Associate with the successful.

11. Learn to keep people dependent on you

The more people rely on you, the more power you have.

12. Use selective honesty and generosity to disarm your victim

A single honest gesture can mask your deeper motives.

13. When asking for help, appeal to people's self-interest

People care more about themselves than your cause.

14. Pose as a friend, work as a spy

Gather intelligence quietly to gain leverage.

15. Crush your enemy totally

Don't let defeated enemies regroup. Eliminate threats entirely.

16. Use absence to increase respect and honor

Too much presence dulls impact. Step away to be desired.

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17. Keep others in suspended terror: cultivate an air of unpredictability

Being unpredictable keeps opponents off guard.

18. Do not build fortresses to protect yourself - isolation is dangerous

Stay engaged with the world to stay informed and powerful.

19. Know who you're dealing with - do not offend the wrong person

Some people are vengeful or irrational. Study them first.

20. Do not commit to anyone

Stay free and flexible. Commitment makes you predictable.

21. Play a sucker to catch a sucker - seem dumber than your mark

Underestimating you gives you the advantage.

22. Use the surrender tactic: transform weakness into power

Surrender strategically to buy time and gain control.

23. Concentrate your forces

Focus energy on a single, strong front for impact.

24. Play the perfect courtier

Master social rules and diplomacy to navigate power circles.

25. Re-create yourself

Be the master of your image and identity.

26. Keep your hands clean

Let others do your dirty work. Keep your image intact.

27. Play on people's need to believe to create a cult-like following

Offer meaning or vision, and people will follow.

28. Enter action with boldness

Hesitation shows weakness. Be bold and decisive.

29. Plan all the way to the end

Always have a strategy and think long-term.

30. Make your accomplishments seem effortless

Hide all the hard work. Appear naturally gifted.

31. Control the options: get others to play with the cards you deal

Give them choices - all of which serve your purpose.

32. Play to people's fantasies

Truth is ugly; fantasies sell.

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33. Discover each man's thumbscrew

Find their weakness - and control it.

34. Be royal in your own fashion: act like a king to be treated like one

Carry yourself with confidence and self-respect.

35. Master the art of timing

Never rush. Wait for the perfect moment.

36. Disdain things you cannot have: ignoring them is the best revenge

Attention gives power. Deny your enemies attention.

37. Create compelling spectacles

Visuals and drama are persuasive.

38. Think as you like but behave like others

Don't alienate. Blend in while keeping your own mind.

39. Stir up waters to catch fish

Chaos can reveal your opponent's weaknesses.

40. Despise the free lunch

What is free is dangerous. Pay your way.

41. Avoid stepping into a great man's shoes

Create your own legacy; don't live in another's shadow.

42. Strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter

Remove the leader and the group falls apart.

43. Work on the hearts and minds of others

Win people emotionally, not just logically.

44. Disarm and infuriate with the mirror effect

Imitate opponents to unsettle and expose them.

45. Preach the need for change, but never reform too much at once

People fear sudden change. Ease them into it.

46. Never appear too perfect

Envy breeds enemies. Show some flaws.

47. Do not go past the mark you aimed for - in victory, learn when to stop

Know when to quit. Don't let success become greed.

48. Assume formlessness

Adapt. Be like water-fluid, changing, unstoppable.