



# Why do we obey?

## Purpose

To develop an understanding of power relationships, where power comes from and different sources of power. This tool can be used after 'Who has power in a school?'

## Preparation

Practice the exercise yourself beforehand

## Time

20 minutes

## Materials

Flipchart, marker pens, paper

## Related tools

Who has power in a school?

## Description

Explain the purpose of the activity.

Ask the group if they remember their schooldays. Invite them to form pairs and to consider the following scenario:

When a teacher tells a class to open their books at page 7 and do exercise 3, why do the pupils do it? Ask them to list all the reasons. Allow 5 minutes for this.

List what they come up with, taking one suggestion from each pair in turn until everything is written up. Leave spaces between the items. Use the list to draw out the generalised sources of power (as in the brackets below), and draw out the basic point that the power of some depends on the obedience of others.





The list might include:

- Desire to do well in exams (**incentives**)
- Teachers have a right to ask this (**legitimacy**)
- Everyone else is doing it (**pressure to conform**)
- My teacher has knowledge which I want (**knowledge, skills**)
- That's what you do in school (**social tradition, habit**)
- Fear of punishment (**sanctions**)
- Because my teacher is wonderful (**charisma**)

**Note:** this exercise might not bring out money or resources as sources of power, but interestingly a further reason 'because it interests me' alters the power dynamic so that the teacher becomes an aide to the pupil attaining their goal.

### Debrief

- How do you relate this understanding of power to your own campaign/ social change work?
- How will you use it?

