



Framing & Priming

Persuasion & Influence · Tier 2 · Component 1 — instructor overview

Grades: 9–10 **Time:** ~45 min (flexible) **Format:** whole-class reading, then individual or pairs

By the time an argument is spoken aloud, the persuasion is often already finished. Whoever set the **frame**, planted the **prime**, and dropped the **anchor** has quietly pre-decided how the audience will receive whatever comes next. This component teaches students to see that setup — and take it apart.

WHAT STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO DO

- Explain how a **frame**, a **prime**, and an **anchor** shape a judgment before any claim is made.
- Reframe a statement to keep the facts identical while flipping the feeling.
- Identify the first image, question, or number in a message and describe how it tilts everything after it.
- Strip a persuasive message down to its bare, un-framed fact.

WHY IT MATTERS

Students entering high school can usually evaluate an argument once it's on the table. What they rarely notice is that the table was set before they arrived. A price presented as "less than a coffee a day," a poll preceded by an alarming story, a "was \$200, now \$80" tag — none makes a false claim, yet each has done persuasion's work in advance.

This is a consumer skill and a civic one. The same three moves price a subscription and sell a policy. A citizen who can name the frame is much harder to move without noticing.

PACING

SEGMENT	TIME	WHAT HAPPENS
Reading	10–12 min	Read the Student pages together; pause at the NovaFit example.
Framing drill	10 min	Activity Part A — reframe statements in pairs.
Prime & anchor	12–15 min	Activity Parts B–C.
Debrief	8–10 min	Discussion prompts (Instructor p. 4).

MATERIALS

The 4 Student pages per student or pair. Optional: a real product page or news headline to strip down together.



Framing & Priming

The mechanism in depth — part 1 of 2

Framing, priming, and anchoring share one trait that makes them powerful and easy to miss: they operate *before* the explicit claim, on the mental context a claim lands in. None requires a false word. The reading uses one running example — **NovaFit**, a fitness app raising its price — because all three moves show up in a single product rollout your students would recognize.

FRAMING: THE SAME FACT, A CHOSEN CONTEXT

A frame is the context a communicator chooses to place a fact inside. "Ground beef that's 80% lean" and "20% fat" describe the identical product, but people reliably prefer the first — the fact is constant; the feeling is chosen. The classic demonstration is medical: a treatment described as "90% survive" is chosen far more often than the same treatment described as "10% die." This is the well-documented framing effect, and it turns on a quirk of human judgment — we evaluate outcomes against a reference point, as gains or losses, and losses loom larger than equivalent gains.

Watch NovaFit use it. The new plan costs \$156 a year. Framed as a yearly total, that's a number you'd stop and weigh — so NovaFit doesn't say it. It says "less than a coffee a day": the same money, re-anchored to a trivial daily purchase you don't scrutinize. Then it frames the choice itself as a loss to avoid — not "upgrade to get more," but "don't lose the progress you've worked for." Gain-framed, the upgrade competes with everything else you could buy. Loss-framed, quitting feels like giving something up, and that asymmetry is doing the selling.

The teaching point is not that NovaFit lied — it didn't. The persuasion lives entirely in *which true description was chosen*. That is what makes framing so deniable, and so worth naming.



Framing & Priming

The mechanism in depth — part 2 of 2

PRIMING: WHAT YOU SEE FIRST DECIDES WHAT YOU NOTICE

Priming is the cue placed just before a message that tilts how the message is read. Whatever comes first carries extra weight — the primacy bias — and it makes related ideas easier to bring to mind, so they feel more relevant a moment later. A survey that opens with a vivid crime story before asking about policing gets more fearful answers than the identical survey shown cold; nothing in the question changed, only what was activated first.

NovaFit primes with pride. The instant before the upgrade screen, the app surfaces your best week, your longest streak, a testimonial from someone "just like you." By the time the price appears, you are already in a self-improving, don't-let-yourself-down frame of mind. The prime isn't an argument for the subscription — it's the mood the argument arrives in, and it was engineered.

ANCHORING: THE FIRST NUMBER OWNS THE RANGE

An anchor is the first quantity a person encounters; it silently sets the reference point every later number is judged against, even when the anchor is arbitrary. Show someone "\$25/month," then "\$13/month," and \$13 reads as generous — the anchoring effect at work. Negotiators, retailers, and fundraisers all open high for this reason: the opening figure, not the item's worth, becomes the yardstick.

NovaFit's screen never shows \$13 alone. It shows **\$25** struck through, *then* \$13. The \$25 was likely never a real, sustained price — its only job is to be the anchor that makes \$13 feel like a rescue rather than a raise.

TWO THINGS TO CARRY INTO THE ROOM

The frame is an argument no one had to make. The whole method is to win the point without stating it, so have students restate the bare fact and watch what feeling falls away — that residue was the frame. **Framing is not lying,** and saying so out loud matters: every individual word can be true. The skill isn't catching falsehoods; it's noticing when the *setup*, not the evidence, is doing the persuading.



Framing & Priming

Discussion guide — modular; assemble to fit your period

These blocks are timed so you can build a lesson from them: a single period, or a full unit day. Run the activity with an opener before and a debrief after — pick what fits.

TIME BUDGET — MIX AND MATCH

BLOCK	TIME	USE
Opener (before)	5–8 min	Pick one, below.
Activity	20–25 min	The student pages.
Debrief (after)	~5 min each	Pick 1–4 prompts.
Close	3 min	The takeaway.

Single period: opener + activity + one debrief + close. **Full lesson:** opener + activity + two or three debriefs + an extension.

BEFORE — THE OPENER (PICK ONE · 5–8 MIN)

FORMAT: think-pair-share or a quick hands-up. GOAL: surface what students already notice and pose the question. END RESULT: every student has committed to a prediction or named a real example you can return to in the debrief.

- **Predict.** Show “Was \$200 — now \$80!” and take a quick hands-up: good deal or not? Don't resolve it — revisit after the anchoring section.
- **From their world.** Ask each pair for one ad or headline from this week that *felt* persuasive; keep two on the board to reframe during the debrief.

THE ACTIVITY (BUDGET 20–25 MIN)

CONCRETE GOAL — STUDENTS CAN: take a real message, restate its bare fact, and name the frame, prime, or anchor that was added on top.

AFTER — THE DEBRIEF (PICK 1–4 · ~5 MIN EACH)

FORMAT: whole-class; call on the examples students generated in the opener and activity. END RESULT: students can state the takeaway in their own words and back it with one concrete example from their own life or the activity.

- Can two true statements of one fact lead people to opposite choices? Why?
- What's the difference between a prime and the actual claim?
- Why does the first number in a negotiation matter so much?
- Take one example from the board: what's the frame, and what's the neutral version?

CLOSE (3 MIN)

Have a few students state the takeaway in their own words: **Restate the bare fact; whatever feeling falls away was the frame doing the work.**



Framing & Priming

Leading the discussion — pacing, redirects, and warm-ups

The previous page is the plan; this page is for running it. Budget the period from the total below, and keep the redirect moves handy — most discussions falter in one of these four ways.

DOES IT FIT THE PERIOD?

ONE PERIOD (~45–50 MIN): opener 6 + activity 20–25 + one debrief 5 + close 3 = **34–39 min.** BLOCK (~90 MIN): add two more debriefs and a differentiation extension from the facilitation page.

WHEN DISCUSSION STALLS OR DERAILS

IF...	MOVE
Silence, or “I don’t know”	Shrink the question: “Just name the first thing you noticed.” Give 30 seconds of silent think-time, then call on a pair, not an individual.
One or two voices dominate	“Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t gone yet.” Run it as think-pair-share first, so every student has an answer ready to offer.
It turns personal or heated	Move the trial from the person to the message: “What in the text makes you say that?” Keep the claim on trial, never the classmate.
Answers stay on the surface	Push for evidence: “Where exactly — quote the line.” Then “What would change your mind?” to surface the reasoning underneath.

WARM-UP BANK (SWAP IN FOR ANY OPENER)

Interchangeable with the opener on the previous page. Vary them across a unit so the hook stays fresh.

- **Two-minute hunt.** Find one real example of today’s move on your phone right now; keep the best one for the debrief.
- **Steelman it.** What’s the most honest reason someone would use this technique? Persuasion isn’t always dishonest — name the legitimate version first.
- **Rate and defend.** Put one message on the board; everyone rates it 1–5 for how persuasive, then defends the spread of answers.
- **Odd one out.** Three short examples, one isn’t the move — which, and how can you tell?



Framing & Priming

Facilitation, anticipated moves & answer key

ANTICIPATED STUDENT RESPONSES & MISCONCEPTIONS

- **"So framing is just lying."** Every word can be true — have them find the honest fact inside a loaded frame; the discomfort of "honest *and* manipulative" is the lesson.
- **"If you know about it, it stops working."** Framing effects persist even when named. The goal is to slow down and restate the fact, not to become immune.
- **"Every frame is bad."** You can't communicate without a frame; a doctor saying "90% survive" to reassure is framing too. The question is whether the frame serves you or the persuader.
- **Anchor confusion.** Some call any number an anchor. Anchors are the *first / reference* number that sets the range — press them to say which came first.

DIFFERENTIATION & EXTENSIONS

Support: give the reframe pairs as multiple choice before students generate their own. **Stretch:** have students annotate a real product page for all three moves, or write an "honest version" and compare persuasive power. **Cross-curricular:** relative vs. absolute risk in statistics; ballot-measure wording in civics.

ANSWER KEY — ACTIVITY

ITEM	SAMPLE RESPONSE
A1 "90% survival rate"	"1 in 10 die" — <i>same fact, loss frame.</i>
A2 "80% fat-free"	"20% fat."
A3 "Only \$3 a day"	"\$1,095 a year."
B (the clip)	<i>Primes alarm before the question; sets mood, makes no argument about the alarm system.</i>
C (the jacket)	<i>Anchor = \$220. Real check: what has it actually sold for recently/elsewhere?</i>



Framing & Priming

How the persuasion happens before the argument

Open your fitness app one morning and it greets you: your best week ever, a seven-day streak, a note from someone "just like you" who hit their goal. Then, warmly, it offers Premium — "**less than a coffee a day.**" The old price, \$25, is crossed out. Today it's \$13. You feel good about tapping yes.

Here's what's strange: nobody argued with you. No one listed reasons Premium is worth it, or asked whether you actually need it. Yet the decision felt half-made before you saw the price. That's not an accident — it's a setup, and it has three parts.

THE SETUP DECIDES THE VERDICT

We usually think persuasion *is* the argument — the reasons, the pitch, the claim. But a huge amount of persuasion happens **before** the argument, in how the situation is arranged for you. Whoever controls that setup has tilted the field before the first word of the actual case. Three moves do most of the work: **framing** decides what a fact means, **priming** decides what you notice first, and **anchoring** decides what counts as normal. None requires a single false word.

FRAMING: THE SAME FACT, A CHOSEN CONTEXT

"90% of patients survive this surgery" and "1 in 10 die" are the *same number*. But they don't feel the same, and people choose differently depending on which they hear. That's framing: choosing which true version of a fact to show. Gain or loss, big number or small, compared to this or to that — the facts hold still while the feeling gets chosen for you.

Your fitness app is a master of it. Premium costs \$156 a year — a number you might actually stop and weigh. So the app never says it. "Less than a coffee a day" is the exact same money, re-dressed as a purchase too small to think about. And notice it doesn't say "upgrade to get more." It says *don't lose your progress*. Losing something hurts more than gaining the same thing feels good — so a choice framed as avoiding a loss pulls harder. Same money, same app, opposite feeling.



Framing & Priming

The setup, continued

PRIMING: WHAT YOU SEE FIRST

A **prime** is whatever you see or feel right before a message — and it colors how you read that message. Whatever comes first gets extra weight and pulls related thoughts to the front of your mind. Watch a ten-second clip of a cracked phone screen, then get asked "how reliable is this phone?" and you'll rate it lower than if you'd been asked cold. The clip made no argument. It set a mood, and the mood answered the question.

Back to the app: the streak, the personal best, the testimonial — all appear in the seconds before the price. Not a reason to buy Premium — a mood (proud, motivated, don't-let-yourself-down) that you make the money decision from inside. The prime was placed there on purpose.

ANCHORING: THE FIRST NUMBER

The first number you see becomes the yardstick for every number after it — even if that first number is made up. Show someone \$25, then \$13, and \$13 feels like a steal. Show them \$13 alone and it's just a price. That's **anchoring**: why stores show a crossed-out "original" price, why negotiations open high, why "was \$220, now \$75" makes \$75 feel generous even if the jacket never really sold for \$220.

Your app never shows you \$13 by itself. It shows **\$25**, crossed out, and *then* \$13. The \$25 might never have been a real, lasting price. Its only job is to sit there first and make \$13 look like a rescue.

THE MOVE: FIND THE BARE FACT

Here's the tool that beats all three. Strip the message to the plain fact and say it out loud: "*Premium costs \$156 a year.*" Now notice what feeling drained away — the coffee, the streak, the crossed-out \$25. That feeling was the setup. The fact was always just a fact; everything else was arranged for you. You can still choose to buy Premium — but now *you're* choosing, from the fact, instead of from the frame.



Framing & Priming

Name: _____ Date: _____

The three moves: Frame (chosen context) · Prime (what you see first) · Anchor (the first number) · **The tool:** restate the bare fact

PART A — REFRAME IT

Rewrite each so the fact is identical but the feeling flips. Underline the word you changed.

STATEMENT	YOUR REFRAME (SAME FACT, OPPOSITE FEEL)
1. "This surgery has a 90% survival rate."	
2. "This snack is 80% fat-free."	
3. "It's only \$3 a day."	
4. "Nine out of ten students passed."	

PART B — SPOT THE PRIME

A store's site plays a short clip of a burglary, then asks: "Do you feel safe without our alarm system?" One sentence each:

- What feeling is the clip **priming**?
- How is that different from an actual argument that you need the alarm?

**PART C — DROP THE ANCHOR**

A jacket tag reads: "**Originally \$220 — today only \$75!**"

- Which number is the **anchor**?
- What would you need to find out to know whether \$75 is actually a good price?

PART D — TAKE APART A ROLLOUT

Think of a real product, app, or campaign you've seen recently (like NovaFit). Describe how it uses — or could use — all three moves on you.

MOVE	HOW IT SHOWS UP
Frame	
Prime	
Anchor	

PART E — THE BARE FACT

For the message in Part D, write the single bare fact underneath all the framing. What feeling falls away when you state it plainly?
