

Entitled people don't follow instructions because they see them as 'unfair'

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From job applications to being in line at the DMV, instructions, and the expectations that we follow them, are everywhere. Recent research found people with a greater sense of entitlement are less likely to follow instructions than less entitled people are, because they view the instructions as an unfair imposition on them. The results appear in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Scientists already know entitled people - technically, individuals with a higher sense of entitlement - are more likely to believe they deserve preferences and resources that others don't and that they are less concerned about what is socially acceptable or beneficial. For authors Emily Zitek (Cornell University) and Alexander Jordan (Harvard Medical School), understanding the reasons for their behavior could lead to solutions as well.

"The fact that there are a lot of complaints these days about having to deal with entitled students and entitled employees," says Zitek, "suggests the need for a solution."

Zitek and Jordan conducted a series of studies, first to see who was more likely to avoid following instructions in a word search. After establishing that people who scored high on measures of entitled personality were less likely to follow instructions, they provided a set of scenarios to try to understand why the entitled individuals ignore the instructions: selfishness, control, or punishment. But none of these affected the outcomes; entitled people still wouldn't follow instructions.

The researchers were surprised that it was so hard to get entitled individuals to follow instructions.

"We thought that everyone would follow instructions when we told people that they would definitely get punished for not doing so, but entitled individuals still were less likely to follow instructions than less entitled [individuals](#)," said Zitek.

A final set of experiments, exploring fairness, finally got to the reason: "Entitled people do not follow instructions because they would rather take a loss themselves than agree to something unfair," wrote the authors.

"A challenge for managers, professors, and anyone else who needs to get people with a sense of entitlement to follow instructions is to think about how to frame the instructions to make them seem fairer or more legitimate," said Zitek.

Zitek and Jordan write that organizations and societies run more smoothly when [people](#) are willing to follow instructions.

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