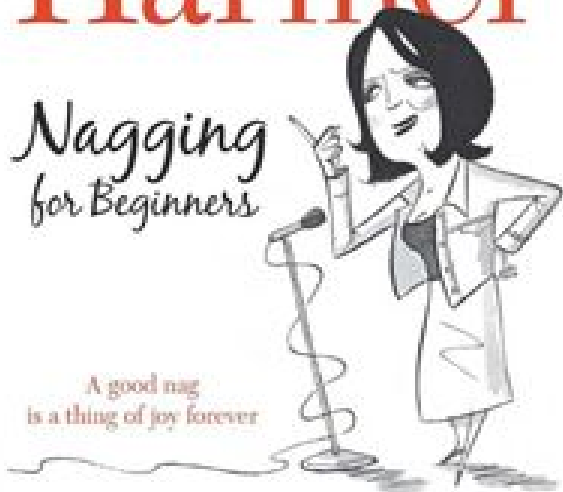


# Wendy Harmer

## *Nagging for Beginners*

*A good nag  
is a thing of joy forever*



# Nagging for Beginners

WENDY HARMER is one of Australia's leading humourists. She is a mother of two, veteran of the Edinburgh, Montreal, Glasgow and Mayfest comedy festivals and hosted 2DayFM's top-rating Breakfast Show for eleven years. Wendy is also the author of three books for adults, including the bestselling *Farewell My Ovaries* and *Love and Punishment*, as well as two plays and a series of children's book about Pearlie the park fairy. Wendy has hosted, written and appeared in a wide variety of TV shows and has been a regular newspaper and magazine contributor.

# Wendy Harmer

## *Nagging for Beginners*

Illustrations by Andrew Joyner

  
ALLEN & UNWIN

*For my father, who has been mightily nagged  
and dearly loved in equal measure*

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# *Nagging for Beginners*

Nagging is the most ancient and universally practised, but perhaps the least celebrated, of all the female arts. Nagging has been with us for some 160 000 years, ever since the earliest homo sapiens was told to go right back outside the cave and wipe his filthy, hairy feet because he was tracking in dirt on the animal skin rugs.

“Oh, no! I’ve just cleaned that!” is a female phrase which has reverberated in the halls of human habitation since the dawn of civilisation.

Throughout the millennia, nagging has been, if not at the heart, then certainly in the ear, of most human endeavour. Nagging has precipitated the rise and fall of empires, the discovery of new continents, the majority of advances in technology, the establishment of towns, cities

and nicer bathrooms, and the transport of many, many millions of tonnes of rubbish, clothing and utensils from one location to another.

Despite this astonishing record of achievement, naggers have never been accorded their rightful place in the pages of history. Instead, they have been maligned and ridiculed, blamed and shamed, banished, burned and beheaded.

While menfolk remain ignorant and dismissive of the intricacies and skills involved in nagging, all women know that an expert nagger employs the wisdom of the Oracle of Delphi, the cunning of Cleopatra, the bravery of Boadicea, the lung capacity and indefatigability of Dame Nellie Melba and the sheer determination and bloody mindedness of Margaret Thatcher.

Unfortunately, in these modern times, the art of nagging is in danger of being lost to future generations of women, along with so many other traditional domestic skills — fruit bottling, jam making, darning, flower arranging, embroidery and crochet. The reasons for the decline in the frequency and quality of nagging are manifold but, at last, help is at hand.

*Nagging for Beginners* aims to re-acquaint wives and girlfriends with the age-old rewards of nagging by offering a beginner's guide to the variety and techniques of this ancient art.

I hope you get much enjoyment and the results you seek from this small book. Remember, whenever your partner complains that you nag, the answer is: "If you did it the first time I asked, I wouldn't have to nag."

Enjoy,

*Wendy Harmer*





# The Solo Nag

Sometimes we naggers just like to hear the sound of our own voice, even if we are the only person within earshot. No-one need hear this monologue. It is still a deeply satisfying nag.

*Oh yes, well that would be typical! Wet paintbrushes left in my sink. I suppose I'll just have to clean it up myself. No, really Terry, don't bother. There's nothing I enjoy more than cleaning oil-based paint out of grouting.*



# The One Topic Nag

This nag requires both patience and timing and should not be attempted by the novice nagger. Performed correctly, it scores maximum irritation points.

*Trevor, what about taking out the rubbish?*

Wait five minutes.

*Trevor, you said you'd take out the rubbish.*

Wait three minutes.

*What about that rubbish Trevor? It's still sitting there.*

Wait one minute.

*The rubbish won't take itself out Trevor.*

Wait 30 seconds.

*TREVOR? ARE YOU DEAF?*





# The Variety Nag

This nag can be effective when used selectively. It is a somewhat scattergun approach and the risk here is that the nag-ee may tune out mid-nag and hear only blah, blah, blah! However, it has enormous potential if delivered with precise volume and breath control.

*Gary, this cupboard door is still hanging off, the light on the porch needs replacing, the kids want a new back wheel for the bike and the dog needs walking. Can we expect anything to be done today, or nothing, as usual?*

# The Pre-emptive Nag



Why wait until something goes wrong before you nag? The Pre-emptive Nag is an excellent example of Surgical Strike or Smart Nagging.



*I hope you're going to watch yourself tonight, Kevin.  
We don't want a repeat of last year's debacle!*





# The Retrospective Nag

The damage has already been done and there is no apparent benefit to be gained from this nag. In this instance men may ask: Why nag? The answer is, obviously: Why not?

*If you'd looked it up in the street directory as I asked you to in the first place, Darren, we wouldn't be sitting here in this traffic now. Do you ever listen to anything I say?*

# The Post-Mortem Nag



Not to be confused with the Retrospective Nag, the Post-Mortem is best employed when the nag-ee has no recollection of recent behaviour. This is a speciality nag, best used on the Morning-After-The-Night-Before.

*Well, I imagine you're pleased with your efforts, Gavin. After your star turn last night I don't imagine we'll be invited back there again! Let's not answer the telephone this week, just in case it's the media.*

# The Spontaneous Nag



Sometimes we can't help it. There we are, just quietly going about our business, when the nag pops out. We are as surprised as anyone else. There is nothing to be alarmed about here. The Spontaneous Nag is a natural part of being female.

*Gee it looks like a nice day — BARRY! WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO PAINT THE BEDROOM CEILING? — I think I might go to the plant nursery and buy a lavender bush.*

(Often we do not care about the bedroom ceiling, or even know who Barry is.)



# Third Party Nags

Every now and then we require a little extra leverage in a nag and a third party must be introduced.

*Well, Lorraine says Craig has already got their barbecue cleaned out and they're having people over tomorrow. Summer will be finished at the rate you're going.*



*I've organised three quotes on the driveway paving. I know you've said you'll do it, Derek, but it can't hurt to have a professional opinion. They're coming tomorrow at 6 a.m. Can you move the car?*

*I've taped Backyard Blitz for you, Bruce. I thought we could have a look at it together and get some ideas for that water feature we've been talking about.*



# The Channelling Nag

This nag cannot be employed to its full potential unless you have children. However, in cases where there is an extreme need, a beloved household pet can be a useful substitute.

*Daddy's a very silly man, isn't he, darling? He leaves his clothes everywhere and wet towels lying on the floor. We'll run away and find our own little house and leave Daddy here by himself if he doesn't lift his game, won't we, sweetie?*

(This nag may also be regarded as good workplace training for young female family members.)



# *The “I Love You” Nags*

These nags require careful emotional preparation. Just as virginity or orgasm can be faked, so too can a compliant, adoring demeanour. Naggers should not expect instant results here, but rather a full capitulation from the nag-ee on a future special occasion — birthday, Christmas, wedding anniversary, St Valentine’s, etc. At this time naggers should prepare suitable reactions of Utter Surprise, Sheer Gratitude and Tears of Joy.\*

\*See Academy Award speeches at <[www.oscars.org](http://www.oscars.org)>

*Just because I cook you your favourite dinner, Declan, doesn't mean I want something. I like doing nice things for you. Why does everything I do these days have to be about the house extensions? If I want something, I'll ask.*





*So what if every other woman gets an eternity ring after producing three kids? It doesn't mean I have to have one too. We've got more important things to spend our money on, like buying that new set of golf clubs you want. Seeing you happy is what makes me happy, Wayne.*

*Don't mind me, Ron. Sometimes I just get focused on the small things in life and I lose sight of the big picture. In the end, what does a swimming pool mean anyway? The main thing is that we have a great life together, beautiful kids and, honestly, a little bit of heat stroke never hurt anyone.*





# Bedroom Nags

Sex is an essential and pleasurable part of any relationship, which of course makes it a powerful bargaining tool. Before, during, after? Relax! There's no wrong time for a bedroom nag.

## Before

*I'm just not in the mood. All I can think about is that pile of rubbish that's sitting and rotting in the driveway. Did you hear that? It sounded like a rat! I'm going to get out of bed and have a look.*



*I've still got the ironing to do, so do please try and keep it simple!*

*Don't turn the lights on. If I have to look at that awful wallpaper  
I just won't get there.*

*During*

*Do I always have to do everything myself?*

*I had a sort of one, I think. I'm probably just tired from running after the kids all day while you were at the cricket.*

*Oh, oh, OH! That feels SO good! You know, if you sold the boat we'd have a lot more time to do this. A little bit higher.*



## *After*

*Well, that was nice and quick! Now put the light on so we can have another look at this paint chart.*

*Truly, it wasn't that bad. It'll probably be better when we get the new bed.*

*No, you go to sleep. I just can't help lying here wondering whether what that tarot card reader said was actually true.*



# *Mental Health Nag*

It's obvious — but sometimes our partners forget — that we know better than they do what will make them happy. We're intuitive and sensitive souls. We're good at this psychoanalysis stuff.



*I can see that having the guttering always hanging over your head is stressing you out, Neville. Why don't you just get it over and done with and then you'll feel a lot better? Honestly, you know I'm right on this.*



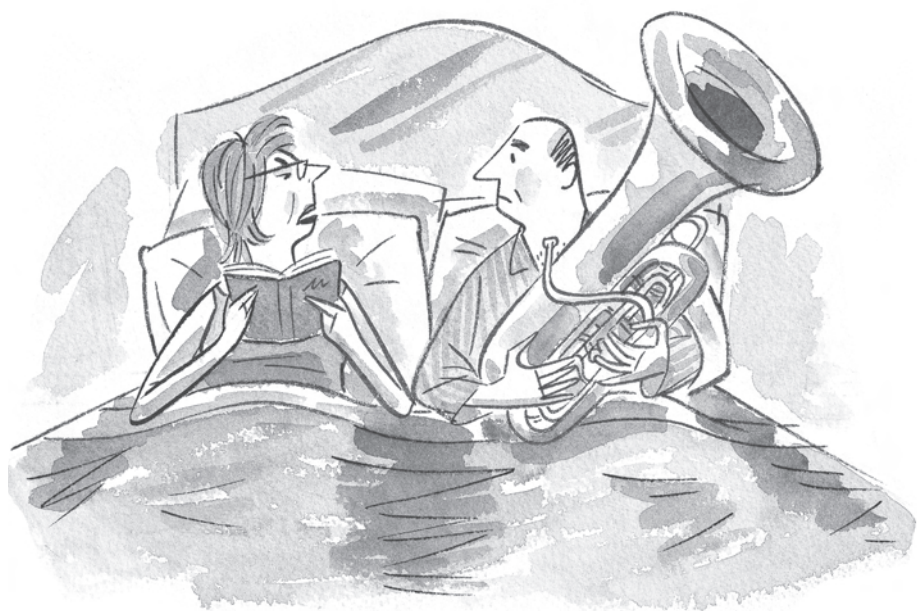
# The Precision Nag

These nags are elegant, spare, almost Zen in their approach  
— useful for the time-poor nagger.

*Aww, no, not again!*

*Why now?*

*Must you?*



# The Name Nag

Creative use of the nag-ee's name can garner quick results.  
Remember tone, volume, musicality and inventiveness all score  
points in this nag.

*Shhhhaaaaaannnnne!*

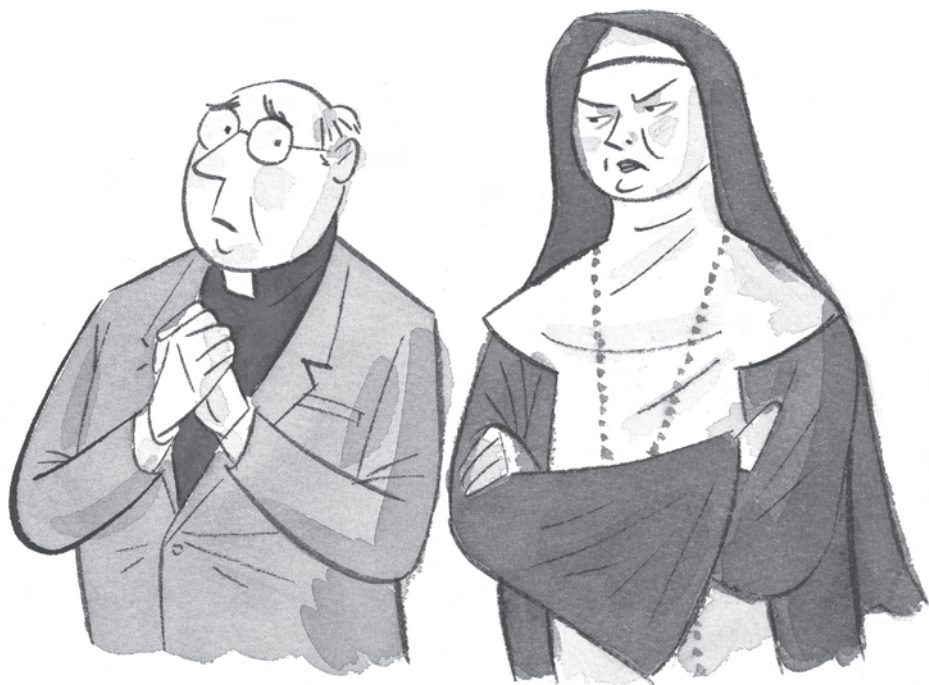
*Colin Bernard Bede McCarthy!*

*Raymond, Raymond, Raymond!*



# *Silent-But-Deadly Nags*

Sometimes silence is worth a thousand words. Silent-But-Deadly Nags can be as short as A Look, A Pause or A Slow Outward Or Inward Breath. In their longer form these nags may span from minutes to months. However, with all of them, the nagger needs suitable responses when challenged.



*I'm not rolling my eyes. I'm just looking at the dust on top of that window sill.*

*No, I haven't hung up. I'm still here.*

*What's wrong with sighing? Everyone sighs. Maybe I'm just tired. Did you ever think of that?*

*There's nothing wrong. Sometimes I just like being quiet. It doesn't always have to mean I'm in a bad mood.*

*I'm not talking to you. You know why.*







# Noisy Nags

These nags can be used when the nagger realises that the nag-ee is not listening or out of hearing range and mere words will not have the desired effect. For instance — when the nag-ee is engrossed in a televised sporting fixture, a protracted telephone call, poker game, crossword, hobby or working from a home office. A successful Noisy Nag will summon the nag-ee to see what the racket is about. Again the nagger will need suitable excuses when challenged.

CLANG, CLANG, CRASH!

*I'm not mad! I just dropped some pots and pans. As I keep telling you, these cupboards are so small sometimes it's hard to find what you want right down the back. I'm not doing it on purpose.*

BANG, BANG, BANG!

*Oh sorry! I didn't mean to disturb you. I know you have more important things to do and I have to learn how to do this myself sometime. By the way, are these coach bolts OK for this plaster wall?*

VRROOOM, VRROOOM!

*This vacuuming will only take a minute. After all, it's got to be done sometime. Why don't you just turn up the volume or go somewhere quieter?*



# *Best Mate Nag*

There will be times when he is unavailable, so you will nag his best mate instead. Don't feel guilty, this is what his mates are for.



*Am I being unreasonable here, Gerald? Just tell me, because*

*I don't think I am. If you tell me to "shut up" right now,  
that will be the end of it. But I like to think we've come to an  
understanding over the years and that you respect me enough  
to know that I wouldn't go on about it if it wasn't important.  
Can you see my point here? By the way, do you have a spare  
room at your place?*

# The Theological Nag

Women in religious orders have long been practitioners of the ancient art of nagging and, of course, Brides of Christ have a unique opportunity to take their grievances to the highest authority. However devout women everywhere — sometimes dubbed “Petulant Petitioners” — are also encouraged to make their case directly to the Almighty.

*Dear Lord, while I realise that you are very busy, you must understand that I would not keep praying for you to get Eric moving on clearing out the back shed unless it was very, very important to me. So, if you could see your way clear for a small miracle, I would be eternally grateful. I have now lit ten candles on this one, so please don't let me down. Amen.*





# The Reluctant Nag

It is important that the nag-ee realises that no woman enjoys being a nag. It is in fact the last thing on our minds and we would rather spend our time having sex.

*Please don't make me nag you.*

*I don't want to sound like I'm nagging you ... but ...*



*Do you think I enjoy nagging you?*

# *The Re-Nag Nag*

Coming at the end of a longer nag, the Re-Nag Nag contains a hint of apology and a touch of regret. The nag-ee thinks he has almost wriggled off the hook, only to be dragged back onto the deck of the boat and filleted.



*I just want to finish this up, Sol. I don't want to nag like this, I really don't. I just want to say that I think you are amazing and that I love you so much. It's just that, when you refuse to do what I ask you, I realise how utterly selfish you really are.*

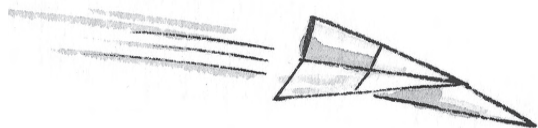
# Documented Nag

Sometimes the nagger is unable to nag in person. In this instance a Documented Nag is an efficient tactic.

*Telephone book opened at tradesman's pages left on kitchen table.*

*Furniture catalogue placed in briefcase.*

*Holiday brochure blu-tacked to forehead.*



# Illustrated Nag

There are times when the nagger knows that even a strategically placed document can be studiously overlooked by the nag-ee.

In this case (for the benefit of the seriously mentally deficient, or sight-impaired nag-ee), a larger item may be strategically placed so as to hinder access or egress.

*A broken toaster on front steps.*

*A rubbish skip in the middle of carport.*

*A pile of damp bathroom towels on one side of bed.*





# Mystery Nag

An excellent nag where there are a number of issues in contention. The aim of this nag is not necessarily to get all tasks finished, but to cause maximum confusion and needless panic as to which one should be tackled first.

*I'm going out and I'll be back around lunch time. If it's not done by then, Bevan ... I will be really angry.*



# The Biographical Nag

Every man has a past which can be effectively strip-mined for nagging opportunities. His poor upbringing and his failed relationships are rich seams for the experienced nagger. These nags can be provocative, and should be employed with due care.

*You don't want to end up like your father.*

*Didn't your mother ever teach you anything?*

*No wonder your first wife walked.*





# Mother Nags

Every nagger realises that the opportunities for nagging need not be limited to co-habiting partners. Naggers may also feel the need to address themselves to children.

## 0-5 yrs

*Now what did I say, Brock? What did Mummy say? Mummy said the toys go in the toy box. Is the floor a toy box? No! Is the back lawn a toy box? No! This is the toy box. You pick up the toys and put them in it. Don't bother asking Daddy to help, he's too busy doing nothing.*

## 6-10 yrs

*Please ... Come on, Jayden! I am trying my best here, but you have to help me. How many times do I have to ask you to put your clothes out to be washed? I am not "nagging" you! Is that what your father said? I am just asking politely. When I start nagging you'll know all about it!*

### *11-15 yrs*

*This is now the fifth time I have come in here to tell you to get out of bed! Yes ... alright Kyle, I am nagging you. If I have to repeat myself over and over to be heard? If that's what it takes for you to do what I ask, then that's what I'll do. You can call it what you like!*

### *16 plus*

*This is what you and your father have turned me into Brody ... A nag! How sad is that? I just thought that if I treated you with respect — if I loved you enough — you might be able to see what it's like to pick up after you day in day out from a woman's point of view. But now I see it's in the genes. You and your father are peas in a pod. Heaven help the poor woman who ends up married to you. I just hope she's got half the patience I have.*







## Witty Nag

It's said that sarcasm is the lowest form of wit, but that is a matter for judgment. There is no doubt that (almost) everyone enjoys a clever nag. And if the nag-ee doesn't find it funny? I'm sorry, what was the question again?

*Are you going to mow the lawn, Brett, or will we wait until someone manages to come up with a genetically engineered giant guinea pig?*

*Are you going to mow the lawn, Brett, or are you planning to bale up the grass and send it to drought-stricken areas?*

*Are you going to mow the lawn, Brett, or should we just add another storey to the house?*

# Head Office Nag

There are times, when (quite frankly) we are tired of cajoling, suggesting, humouring, plotting and planning to produce our desired outcome. We know who's in charge here and so does everyone else — the rest is merely window decoration.

(°Be warned. A certain percentage of men will fake their own death rather than face this nag. Que sera, sera!)



*Harold, it's me. I don't want to hear any more excuses.  
When you get home tonight, you and I are going to sit down  
like two adults, discuss the new tiling in the bathroom, and  
work it out once and for all.*

# The D-Day Nag

There is still some debate in academic circles as to whether the D-Day is technically a nag or an ultimatum. You be the judge. Remember, you are always right. About everything.

*Kelvin! If you don't tile that %&@\*\$ bathroom, that's it, I'm leaving!*



# Ex-Nags

There is no statute of limitation on the nagging of ex-partners. Naggers and nag-ees mate for life, as do black vultures, gibbons and termites. At any time you encounter your ex you are fully entitled to use this nag.



*You have not changed one bit have you, Don? If I'd known that you were such a lost cause I would not have wasted my breath on you for all those years. You know the saddest thing about you? You'll never even know what it was all about.*

*You'll just die wondering.*