

HELPFUL PHRASES FOR SAYING “NO” APPROPRIATELY

Sometimes you know that you want to say “No,” but it’s difficult to figure out how to say it best. The following phrases can help you:

1

VAGUE BUT EFFECTIVE:

“Thanks for the invitation, but I can’t make it.”

2

IT’S NOT PERSONAL:

“Thanks for asking, but I’m not taking on any new projects right now.”

3

TRY AGAIN LATER:

“I’d like to, but I’m not available until [X]. You can ask me again then.”

4

ASK SOMEONE ELSE:

“I can’t do it for you, but I can ask if [X] might be able to.”

5

KEEP TRYING:

“I can’t make those dates, but I’d love to see you. Do you have other options?”

6

TRY SPONTANEITY:

“It doesn’t fit in my schedule right now, but I’d love to do it sometime. Can you call me before you go again?”

7

GRATITUDE:

“Thank you so much for your enthusiasm, but I can’t help you right now.”

8

REFER:

“I can’t do this, but I think you should ask [X] instead.”

9

FIVE-MINUTE FAVOR:

“I can’t do it, but I can help by sending an email.”

10

JUST NO:

“Thanks, but I have to pass.” (And then keep quiet!)

11

ELEGANT:

"I really appreciate your asking me, but I'm already booked."

12

I'M SORRY:

"I wish I could, but I just can't right now."

13

SOMEONE ELSE DECIDED:

"I promised my coach/partner/parents that I wouldn't take on new projects.
I'm working on creating more balance in my life."

14

OTHER (TEAM) ACTIVITIES:

"Thanks for the invitation, but I have practice then and I never miss a session."

15

I CAN'T DO THIS:

"I'm not good at this, so I don't feel competent enough to help you."

16

I'M ALREADY BUSY:

"I appreciate your thinking of me, but I already have plans that day."

17

SETTING BOUNDARIES:

"I can't do this, but I'll tell you what I can do." (And stick to what feels comfortable for you!)

18

NOT NO, BUT ALSO NOT YES:

"I'll think about it and get back to you."

19

SAY NOTHING:

It feels rude to ignore a request, but sometimes it's the best for everyone.

20

EXPLAIN YOUR SITUATION:

"I can't, my parents are sick, the bathroom is being renovated this week,
and report [X] needs to be submitted."

21

I'M OVERWHELMED:

"I need to take care of myself right now."
(Explain that it's not personal, but you can't do what's being asked)

AND FINALLY:

**Practice saying "No" and smile at yourself if you still end up saying "Yes,"
all beginnings are difficult, but practice makes perfect!**

Source:

den Boogert, E. (2022). *Nee: De kunst van nee zeggen* [No: The art of saying NO].
<https://www.evelindenboogertcoachingentraining.nl/nee-leren-zeggen/>