

## How to Say “No”

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*No...No, thank you....*

*Thank you, but no.* (Useful if someone is offering you something you don't want – food, a social invite, etc.)

*I'm afraid not.*

*Sorry, but no.* (But not w/ someone who does not seem likely to respect your “no” in the first place.)

(Non-Explanations)

*That really won't work for me.*

*I really need to say “no” to that.*

*I won't be able to do that for you.*

*...afraid I'm not comfortable with that.*

*I need to take care of myself here and say “no”.*

(Necessary Reversals – an important skill!)

*I know that I originally said I would/could \_\_\_\_\_, but something has come up that I need to attend to.*

*I know that I originally said I would/could \_\_\_\_\_, but then realized that..*

- *I really won't be able to manage it.*
- *I have overcommitted myself, and this would be too much.*
- *I am not comfortable with this.*
- *I should have said “no” in the first place.*

### Pointers & Strategies

1. Remember that “no” is a complete sentence. The extra polite version: “No, thank you.”
2. In \*personal\* interactions, you typically don't owe the other person an explanation. But it might be helpful to use one of the “non-explanations” above. You might have less latitude to say no to your boss, but there are ways to respectfully express reservations such as, “I am only concerned that this (new obligation) will detract from other ongoing projects” or “This is hard because we are already oversubscribed....”
3. If the other person asks for an explanation, tries to make you feel guilty, etc., you can firmly repeat your original statement. If pressure continues, you can say, *I don't really want to explain myself* ~ or ~ *You don't mean to pressure me?* ~or~ *I'm sure you understand I need to do what I'm comfortable with.*
4. If other person is reasonable/respectful but hurt or disappointed, it can be helpful to empathize: *I know this might be disappointing, but I really do need to say 'no'.*
5. If you can't trust yourself to say “no” to extra demands, learn to reflexively say, *I'll need to check my schedule (think about it...talk to spouse, etc.) and get back to you.* You can also say, *It's hard for me to say 'no', but I really must.* Or: *I am trying to work on assertiveness, so I am going to just say 'no'.*

**Important:** If you ever feel threatened or unsafe, say or do whatever you need to, to extricate yourself from the situation. You can later re-group and decide whether/how to follow up with the person to make a more directly assertive response. With someone who has been hostile or aggressive (or might become violent), you have NO obligation to explain or respond to further communications. Your ultimate responsibility is always your own safety & emotional welfare!