

Title:

How to Say "No"

Word Count:

881

Summary:

We all wish we could say "yes" to everybody and everything. And yet sometimes we have to say "no."

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Here's how to say "no" with class and respect.

> Be Courageous

Some people feel afraid to say "no." They may either expect a hostile reaction or they want to be helpful. As a result, they end up inconveniencing both themselves and other people.

Recognize that it is okay to say "no." In fact, most people would rather receive a solid "NO" than an insincere "yes."

> Decline Early

You will save time, energy, and stress by declining offers as soon as you realize that you do not want them. Unanswered questions follow us like hungry orphans, crying for our attention. And our stress increases as their numbers grow. Rescue yourself from this dilemma by making choices. Of course, agree if that is what you want. Otherwise, decline. This frees you to move on with other choices and it frees your mind to consider other possibilities.

> Take an Active Role

Some people attempt to say "no" by ignoring the other person. While this may be an acceptable way to deal with junk mail and cold calls, it is a terrible strategy where you know the other person. This includes situations where you have asked someone to do something, such as send information, prepare a proposal, or call you back.

This strategy fails for the following reasons.

1) The other person has no way of knowing what you are doing. At first, the other person may assume that you are unable to reply because you are traveling, recovering from surgery, or using a defective message system. Eventually, they conclude that you are being rude.

2) Ignoring someone is both mean and unprofessional. It hurts the other person. And that creates feelings of resentment toward you and your company. Remember that those pesky salespeople can also be your customers or able to influence customers.

3) This wastes your time and energy. You (or your staff) have to delete messages, toss out mail, and shove aside the other person's attempts to reach you.

Take charge of the situation and tell the person "no." For example, you can say, "I'm calling to tell you that I have no interest in your offer. Please remove my name from your list. Thank you."

If you want to avoid talking to the person, call when you expect the person will be away from the phone (e.g., during lunch, late evening, early morning, or on a weekend) and leave a message. Use the reply above.

Otherwise, you can send e-mail, a fax, or a note by regular mail.

In all cases, keep the message brief, avoiding explanations or apologies. Just say "no" and move on.

The key point is that once you start a dialogue, you are obligated to end it, rather than let it starve by neglect.

> Use the Magic Phrase

Sometimes the other person wants to argue with you. Perhaps the caller is uncommonly persistent in demanding an explanation. Or maybe you want a gentle way to decline a request from a good friend. In these cases, use the magic phrase that ends the discussion. It is: "I wish I could."

The complete reply includes 1) an acknowledgment of the offer, 2) the magic phrase, and 3) a request or an alternative possibility.

Here's an example of how this might work in a sales situation. "I understand

that you want me to buy your new gizmo. I wish I could. Please take my name off of your list."

And if the caller asks for an explanation, say, "As I said, I wish I could buy this. I have no need for (or no interest in) a gizmo. Please take my name off of your list."

And if the caller persists, say, "I said I have no need for this. You will make better use of your time if you call someone else."

You can also use this in personal situations. For example, you could say, "I understand you want me to take care of your six children and five dogs next week while you go on a vacation. I wish I could. Perhaps you can take the children with you and put the dogs in a kennel."

And if they reply with, "We can't take the children with us. That's why we're asking you to take them." You can say, "I wish I could. Maybe someone else can help."

And if they persist, say, "I understand what you want. And I wish I could help. Excuse me, I have to go now."

#### > An Added Thought

Some people will push very hard to get what they want. They will use insults, guilt, and threats. Wave all of these gimmicks away with replies like these:

"I am still unable to accept your offer."

"Let's leave this on a positive note. I wish I could help. Thank you for asking."

"That sounds like an insult. I said that I have no need for this. Goodbye."

"I find that offensive."

"I disagree with that."

You may notice that all of these are polite replies to being attacked. I recommend being polite because you always want to be the most mature person in every a conversation. That way, you won't have to call back with an apology.

Notice that rejection involves treating the other person with respect and

dignity. Tell people "no" early and politely. And then move on.