

White Space

Refusal Strategies

Below are 21 phrases that will help you build your skills in saying No like a pro.

Some are said directly to a person making a request of you. (Those in quotes.)

Some are said to yourself to fortify your internal resolve (Those without quotes.)

Keep this list handy for upcoming No-pportunities.

1	"I can do this for you this time, but I can't do it for you every time." Ease a demanding person back slowly from their expectations.	
	"May I take 24 hours to get back to you?" Buy yourself time to work through your feelings and options.	2
3	Decide that saying nothing to a request is not an option. Ghosting is a classless act and truly the coward's No.	
	"It does not/will not work for me to..." This clause is a marvelous neutral beginning to any No. Be careful not to be harsh in your delivery.	4
5	"I have something on my calendar." Make sure you write the actual word "Something" on your calendar in spare moments so you can be honest when you use this phrase.	
	Stay out of other people's heads after you say No. It's not always a safe place.	6
7	"If I'm too busy to see my mom, I'm too busy to do this, and I owe my mom a visit." A tidbit from the wonderful Marie Forleo.	
	The difference between successful people and really successful people is that really successful people say No to almost everything. Use this quote by Warren Buffet to inspire your bravery.	8
9	"I can't, but here is another option for you." (No, plus a substitute.) Share a substitute or suggestion in place of your being able to help.	

	<p>“It’s not good for me this time, but let’s look ahead in our calendars.” (No, but next time.)</p> <p>Be careful you are not using a delay to avoid a necessary No. Of course, if timing is really the issue, then push the commitment back.</p>	10
11	<p>“Can I rehearse a No with you?”</p> <p>Ask a colleague or a No-buddy to let you role-play an upcoming No before presenting it.</p>	
	<p>Are you the only person who could do this?</p> <p>Ask yourself this before responding to a request.</p>	12
13	<p>“Sweetie, please take the No.”</p> <p>To use with children asking for the 43rd time if they can do or have something.</p>	
	<p>“Mother/sister/brother/honey, I’m going to give that one a pass.”</p> <p>Use family to practice No when the stakes are low.</p>	14
15	<p>No feels so good afterwards.</p> <p>Remind yourself the freedom of your post-No liberation.</p>	
	<p>“Please take me off this thread.”</p> <p>This email No will save you hundreds of hours a year.</p>	16
17	<p>“I don’t” instead of “I can’t”.</p> <p>This shift in phrasing is great for sticking to diets, commitments, and other self-promises.</p>	
	<p>“Thanks for your directness.”</p> <p>A phrase to use when you’re on the other side of the No.</p>	18
19	<p>An invitation is not a subpoena.</p> <p>One of my favorite reminders before a social No.</p>	
	<p>“My availability this summer/quarter/year is going to be a bit limited.”</p> <p>Set up this pre-No to those who might ask for discretionary time commitments.</p>	20
21	<p>“Sorry, but No.”</p> <p>Yes, it’s a complete sentence. Make sure to smile and then say nothing more.</p>	