

Mamie's Saying No Cheat Sheet

PREPARE TO SAY NO

Saying no is easier under the following conditions.

- **Get clear on your goals and priorities across your life, not just work.** How much time do you want to spend on yourself (health, hobbies, sleep, learning, etc), with friends or family, pursuing personal goals, vacation, etc? How much time do you need for various work projects already on your plate?
- **Set boundaries or guidelines to help you protect your time.** Limit how many events or hours you'll spend on a given activity each week. Determine ahead of time anything you will *always* say no to, such as speaking without a fee or meeting up with friends after 10pm.
- **Craft scripts for saying no.** Brainstorm different scenarios and write down what you'll say for each (or pick from the examples below). Use these as a template in order to make it easier to say no when the time comes.
- **Shift your mindset about saying no.** Saying no doesn't make you a bad...[colleague, friend, vendor, employee, partner, etc]. Making choices that align with your goals and wellbeing is A-OK!

KNOW WHEN TO SAY NO

Use these approaches to help you determine when it's time to say no.

- If it's not a "Hell Yah!", it's a "No."
- Don't ask: "Can I do this?" Ask: "Is this a good use of my time?"
- For any opportunity consider:
 - How does this help advance my goals?
 - How enthusiastic am I about this opportunity?
- Before saying yes, consider what you might have to give up in order to fulfill this new commitment. For example, other opportunities that might be a better fit, time with your family or friends, sleep, or personal time.
- If it doesn't fit in your boundaries or guidelines, say no. If it does fit, question if you want to give one of the precious few spots to this opportunity. Every time you say 'yes' means there's one less spot to be filled, so choose wisely.
- If you don't want to do it this week, say no. Don't push it off to your future self.
- If you find yourself justifying why you should say yes, say no.* For example, maybe I'll meet the right person at the event; It would look good on my resume; I'm sure it will be fun when I get there; I don't want to disappoint them; What if this is my last chance?

**Note that sometimes we do need to encourage ourselves to say yes to things such as showing up for a friend even when we're not excited, following through on a work commitment for our boss or colleague, or motivating us to try something new or intimidating.*

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HOW TO SAY NO

Use these examples as is, with modification, or write your own.

- That sounds amazing. So sorry I can't make it this time.
- I'm already at max capacity, so I'll have to pass.
- Unfortunately that doesn't work for me. But thank you for the invitation.
- I'm limiting any [non-family, non-work, travel, etc] commitments right now, so sadly I have to decline.
- I wish I could make it work.
- I appreciate the offer, but I can't commit.
- You're so kind to think of me, but I don't think I'm the right person for this.
- Regrettably, I'm not able to participate.
- That sounds lovely, but not the right fit for me.
- I have a lot going on already so I can't.
- I'm afraid I can't.
- I'm not taking on any more [clients, projects, travel, commitments, etc] right now.
- I'd love to, but it's just not possible for me.

HOW TO SAY NO TO YOUR BOSS

Saying no to your boss is especially difficult. Use these extra examples.

- My plate is full with these other projects. If I take this on, something else will need to wait. Do you have any guidance on what I should delay?
- I want to do this well, but also know I've got limited time. How do you recommend I prioritize this request amongst the other things I'm working on so that I can give the right amount of time to each?
- Is this time sensitive or can it wait until next week when I'll have time to focus on it?
- I'd be happy to do this, but I'm not sure I'm the [best/right] person. What about asking [fill in the name of a colleague] who is more [skilled/appropriate].
- I could handle this, but what about asking [fill in the name of a colleague] who...
 - ...could benefit from the opportunity to learn how to do this.
 - ...I know is interested in taking on responsibilities like this.
 - ...has some additional capacity right now.