

Just Say No!

In English, we decline things in a certain way, and simply saying “no” or “no thanks” isn’t always acceptable. So, how do you do it without being rude or insulting? Maybe you can try these three simple steps:

1. **Be honest but polite** = the person knows you’re going to say no and prepares them for your answer. Start with:

- “I’m sorry but...”
- “I’m unable to...”
- “I’m afraid that...”
- “I’d really like to, but...”
- “I appreciate the offer, but...”
- “I’d have loved to help you, but ...”
- “I wish I could, but right now I need to focus on...”
- “Normally I’d be able to, but right now I have to....”
- “That would have been great, but I’m already...”

Now the person you are speaking to knows you have refused their request, you can move onto the next step.

2. **Explain why**

- “I’ve got another commitment at that time”
- “I’m not available at that time.”
- “Something has come up.”
- “I’ve got too much on at the moment”
- “I’ve got a lot on my plate at the moment.”
- “That’s not my strong suit” or “I’m not very strong in that area.”
- “That’s not really my cup of tea”
- “I don’t really enjoy that kind of thing.”
- “I’m really busy right now”
- “I’m not available that weekend, etc.”

3. **Follow up with an alternative** = this turns a negative situation into something positive.

If you refuse because of other commitments / you don’t have enough time, you can suggest a time when you would be able to accept the other person’s offer:

- “I might be able to do it next week”

If you think you are not the right person to help, suggest someone who would be in a better position to help:

- “Rosy might be able to help you with that, etc.”

When you say no simply because you don’t want to do something, suggest another thing you could do instead:

- “I really don’t think that would work, maybe we could...”