

20 WAYS TO SAY "NO"

Ramona Creel

"I am in the middle of several projects"

- let people know when you have accepted other responsibilities
- no need to make excuses if you don't have any free time
- no one will fault you for having already filled your plate

"I am not comfortable with that"

- you might be uncomfortable with any of a number of issues
- the people involved, the type of work, the morale implications, etc.
- this is a very respectful way to avoid a sticky situation

"I am not taking on any new responsibilities"

- you aren't saying that you will never help out again
- just that you feel your schedule is as full as you would like now
- understanding your limits is a talent to be expected

"I am not the most qualified person for the job"

- if you don't feel that you have adequate skills, that's okay
- it's better to admit your limitations up front
- the best way to avoid feeling overwhelmed down the road

"I do not enjoy that kind of work"

- life isn't about drudgery -- if you don't enjoy it, why do it?
- don't be afraid to let someone know you just don't want to
- someone else is bound to enjoy the work you don't

"I do not have any more room in my calendar"

- be honest if your schedule is filled
- "filled" doesn't have to mean really filled
- know when you are scheduled as much as you are willing and stop

"I hate to split my attention among projects"

- let people know that you want to do a good job for them
- but you can't when your focus is too divided or splintered
- you will be more effective if you focus on one project at a time

"I have another commitment"

- it doesn't matter what the commitment is
- it can even simply be time to yourself or with friends or family
- you don't have to justify -- you simply aren't available

"I have no experience with that"

- volunteering shouldn't mean learning an entirely new set of skills
- suggest that they find someone who has experience in that area
- offer to help out with something that you already know how to do

"I know you will do a wonderful job yourself"

- people often ask for help because they doubt their own abilities
- let them know that you have confidence they will succeed
- you are actually doing them a favor in the long run

"I need to focus more on my personal life"

- don't be ashamed of wanting to spend time with your family
- having a strong family is an important priority in and of itself
- be willing to put your personal needs first

“I need to focus on my career right now”

- often, you have to focus your energies on a work-related task
- you may have to give up some civic or community duties
- if you don't do it, someone else will take on the task

“I need to leave some free time for myself”

- it's okay to be selfish -- in a good way!
- treat your personal time like any other appointment
- block off time in your calendar and guard it with your life

“I would rather decline than do a mediocre job”

- know when you aren't going to be able to deliver a quality product
- the reason doesn't matter -- not enough time, wrong skills, etc.
- whatever the reason is enough for turning a request down

“I would rather help out with another task”

- saying no doesn't mean that you can't help at all
- if someone asks you to do something you really despise, refuse
- then offer to help with something you find more enjoyable

“Let me hook you up with someone who can do it”

- if you aren't available to help out, offer another qualified resource
- helping to connect people is a valuable service to offer
- make sure the person you refer will represent you well

“No”

- sometimes it's okay to just say no!
- just say it in a way that expresses respect and courtesy
- leave the door open for good relations

“Not right now but I can do it later”

- if you really want to help but don't have time, say so
- offer to help at a later time or date
- if they can't wait for you, they'll find someone else

“Some things have come up that need my attention”

- unexpected things happen that throw your schedule off
- accept that you may need to make a few adjustments
- it is temporary and you will have more time when life stabilizes

“This is really not my strong suit”

- it's okay to admit your limitations
- knowing what you can handle and what you can't is a skill
- your time will be more efficiently spent on something you do well

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