

# How To Say No Without Feeling Guilty In 3 Super Simple Steps



Saying “yes” is a magical feeling that makes you feel good on the inside.

It is also killing your chance to be productive and successful.

By making “no” a rare part of your dictionary, you are putting other people’s needs ahead of yours. This is generally admirable, you are a nice human being and more people should be like you. However, your performance will suffer (if is not suffering already). Learning how to say “no” to people and opportunities is one of the most efficient skills you can develop.

Here’s how to start mastering the art of how to say no:

One of the most useful skills you can develop when it comes to productivity and success is [to learn to say “no” more often](#).

You have limited time, resources, motivation and energy, so you cannot afford to waste them by saying “yes” to everything, or everyone, that comes your way.

*| You need to be able to say “no” to a lot of GOOD things so you can say “yes” to a lot of GREAT things.*

But, saying “no” is not as easy, unfortunately. You can feel guilty for saying it, you can offend the other person/people and a whole bunch of other things can go wrong if you don’t do it the right way.

But, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The battle is not lost, yet. There is a middle ground. A middle ground where you can say no without feeling guilty and, at the same time, not make the other person feel bad about your answer.

Before I show you how to say no the right way, let’s first examine why you feel so uncomfortable with that simple word. Discovering what YOUR reason is would make the whole process that much easier.

## 1. You Don’t Want To Be Rude

You are a nice person. You don’t want to do, or say, anything that can come across as rude. This basic principle of “be nice” is ingrained in every culture and you’ve been brought up with the idea of respect for elders and for people

who are higher than you on the corporate ladder.

A lot of people perceive saying “no” as something rude, or even offensive, so they rarely do it.

## **2. You Don't Want To Ruin The Relationship**

Rarely do complete strangers come and ask you for help. Usually, the people who approach you with something that they need from you are people whom you have some sort of a previous relationship with: friends, colleagues, family members, etc. Often times, you might feel that saying “no” to their request might burn the bridge and ruin the entire relationship.

This irrational fear is another major reason why people don't say no as often as they should.

## **3. You Don't Want To Miss Out**

The “what if” mentality kicks in as soon as you say no to something. What if this is actually a great opportunity? What if you just missed out on the greatest, most amazing, thing that could've ever happened to you?

Second-guessing is another biggie when it comes to saying “no”.

## **4. You Don't Want To Feel Guilty**

When you say “no” to someone, you can quickly be overtaken by guilt, and even regret. You start second-guessing your decision, you start wondering if what just did was not nice, or not polite, or even rude.

In many occasions, to avoid that bad feeling of guilt, people guilt themselves into saying “yes” to something they know they shouldn't have

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What is YOUR reason?

Is it one of the above, or maybe a combination between them? Is it something completely different?

Take a few minutes, do some soul-searching, and figure your reason(s) out. We all come from different backgrounds and cultures, have a different gender and age, so not all reasons will apply to everyone. It is important to find what is your personal mix of reasons because once you do, you can figure out a way to either make piece with them, or completely eliminate them.

The next step in the saying no process is learning how to say no without feeling guilty (or making the other person feel bad). It is much easier than think. Here's how to say no in only 3 steps:



# HOW TO SAY “NO” IN 3 STEPS

*And Not Feel Guilty About It*

## Step 1: Honesty Is The Best Policy

Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

Always reverse the situation. If it was you asking, would you rather get a polite and firm “no”, a “maybe” that you know is going to turn into a “no” later on, or a “yes”, but to feel like the other person only agreed because they felt they had no other choice?

Also keep in mind that up to [75% of communication is non-verbal](#). Your body language will always be honest and will always tell the truth. You read someone’s body language in [1/12th of a second](#) and you do it completely unconsciously. The same applies to your own body language. People can “sense” when you are not being 100% honest.

If someone comes and asks you to do something, you might be tempted to say “maybe later”, when you really mean to give them a firm decline. What you think you are saying is “I want to say “no”, but I don’t want to feel guilty, or offend you, and that’s why I’m telling you it might be possible to do it later”. What the other person reads in your body language is “The answer is “no”, but instead of being honest, I am going to waste both of our times making you think it is possible later when I know it isn’t.”

Rule #1 of how to say no is always default to honesty. Your body language is not good at masking the truth.

### “Successful By Design Lab” Member Extra

Access your *“How To Determine Your Highest Leverage Activities”* video lesson in *Successful By Design Lab*.

Learning how to say “no” is pointless, if you don’t know where to spend your time and resources to maximize your success. These 3-tactics will help you discover the activities that give you the biggest result for the least amount of effort.

[Click here to access this 25-minute video.](#)

Not a Lab member? [Click here to learn more about SBD Lab.](#)

## Step 2: Don’t Over-Explain

You probably hate it when you ask someone for something and they start giving you a long and overly-detailed story of why that is not possible. “Oooh, on that weekend, my cousin is flying in from Chicago and I need to go pick him up exactly when you need this done, and I’ve promised him because of blah, blah, blah…”

You shouldn’t do the same.

Don’t over-explain yourself, or:

- You risk sounding like you are making up the story on the spot
- You open yourself to counter-arguments. If you explain too much, the other person can try to disprove your reason and counter your logic

If there is a story behind why you are saying “no”, keep it brief and to the point. If there is no story, don’t make one up, or you might come across as dishonest.

### **Step 3: Give A Reason Why**

“Because” is a magical word.

As soon as you offer a reason why you said what you said, your entire argument becomes more valid.

[Researchers have found](#) that people standing in line to use a photocopier were 34% more likely to let someone cut in front of them, if you give them a reason, even if the reason is completely arbitrary such as “because I have to to make some copies”.

Simply adding “because” to your statement, makes it 34% more likely to be accepted by the other person.

### **Putting It All Together**

Here’s the formula for how to say no feeling guilty: be honest + be brief + offer a reason why.

Here’s a great example that I use all the time: ” I cannot commit to this because I have other priorities at the moment”.

Let’s break it down. “I cannot commit (a firm no), because (offering a reason why), I have other priorities at the moment (a reason which is short and vague enough not to invite counter-arguments and specific enough not to sounds dishonest).

Another great example: “Now it’s not a good time because I am in the middle of something”. Or you can use this when appropriate “No, I believe it’s not a good fit for me right now”.

### **Over To You Now**

And there you have it, how to say no without feeling guilty.

First, figure out the reason behind the discomfort so you can eliminate it (this eliminates the guilt part).

Then, start practicing saying “no” using the above formula: honest, brief and to the point, don’t over-explain and always back up with a reason why.

Saying “no” is a [habit like any other](#). It takes time to develop so start off easy and build your way up. Once you make it part of your routine, your productivity will soar as you’ll be able to concentrate more of your limited time and resources on what truly matters to you.

**Question: what is another phrase that you can use to say “no” to someone without feeling guilty about it, or offending the other person? Share in the comment section below:**