

Say “NO” with the ADEPT formula

STEP 1:

Acknowledge their request

Affirm the fact that they asked so your declining won't seem dismissive.. Possible phrases:

- I understand this is important.
- I appreciate you thinking of me.
- I wish I could help out here.
- Ordinarily I would love to help.
- Thanks for asking.
- What a great idea!

STEP 2:

Decline politely

Briefly and gracefully give a definite no without being in their face or hard. Phrases:

- I can't do that for you.
- I'm going to pass this time.
- That won't work.
- Not this time.
- No thanks.
- I'll decline on this.

STEP 3:

Explain briefly

Give the short version of why. Don't justify your right to say no. Some phrases:

- I have other commitments.
- That doesn't work for me.
- That would be awkward.
- It's not something I'm good at.
- I'm busy.
- It's not my style.

STEP 4:

Progress the conversation

Move forward with options or alternatives – without taking responsibility for their need. Phrases:

- Some other time maybe.
- Have you considered...?
- If it were me needing that, I think I'd...
- What might work is...
- I was wondering if you could ...
- What I CAN do is...

STEP 5:

Tag. Close with thanks or something that affirms goodwill. Phrases:

- Maybe next time.
- Wish I could.
- I'm glad you feel free to ask. I like for you to ask freely knowing that I will let you know if it doesn't work for me.
- I hope you get the help you need.
- Ask again, will you?