



How to Say 'No'

by Ramona Creel, Professional Organizer

There are a number of things that can keep us from being organized and one of them is saying 'yes' to everyone else but ourselves. When you say 'yes' to others, you say 'no' to yourself and staying organized. Ramona Creel is a professional organizer and understands this struggle, so read on for assistance in learning how to say 'no'.

"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 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 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

“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

“This really is 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

“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