

Most staff who work in schools, like helping others. Many of us are *people pleasers* and we find it difficult to say 'no' to someone who is seeking our assistance.

At times, to stay on track you just have to say 'no'. Try using these strategies for saying 'no' to other people's requests and still keep your reputation intact.

What you don't do determines what you can do.

Tim Ferriss

Defer - I'm not able to assist you at this time. I will be able to help you at a later date. This will filter out those who don't follow up.

Refer - Offer to connect them with someone who is better placed to help them or to some resources that would help them solve it themselves.

Commitment - Share your existing commitments to others, eg "I would really love to assist you with that but I am already helping three others".

Bridge - Connect people who can help each other, perhaps by forming a working party of people that currently have the same issue.

Batch - Combine some requests and help several people at the same time.

Practise - Say it up front: "One of my goals this year is to practice saying 'no'.

Remember, it's essential to be polite and respectful when declining requests. Offering alternative suggestions where possible can help soften the impact of the "no".

Here are ten different ways to politely decline requests for assistance:

- *I'm sorry, but I'm unable to help you with that at the moment.*
- *Unfortunately, I'm currently tied up with other commitments and unable to assist.*
- *I appreciate your request but I'm afraid I have to decline.*
- *I regret to inform you that I'm not available to provide the assistance you're seeking.*
- *I'm sorry but I'm unable to accommodate your request at this time.*
- *I'm afraid I'm not the best person to help you with that. Have you considered reaching out to [alternative person]?*
- *I appreciate you thinking of me but I won't be able to lend a hand in this situation.*
- *I'm sorry but I have to decline your request due to prior commitments.*
- *Regrettably, I'm unable to offer the assistance you're seeking.*
- *I'm sorry but I'm currently unable to take on any additional requests for assistance.*

It can be even more challenging to say no to leaders in your school. Here are some tactful ways to say no to your line manager if you are feeling overloaded and the additional task is likely to have a negative impact on your effectiveness .

- *I understand the importance of the task but unfortunately, I'm currently occupied with [prioritise task] and won't be able to take on this additional responsibility.*
- *I appreciate your trust in my abilities but given my current workload, I'm concerned that taking on this task might affect the quality of my other work.*
- *I'm sorry but I don't think I have the necessary expertise for that particular task. It might be better suited for someone with more experience in that area.*
- *I'm sorry but I have prior commitments and responsibilities that will prevent me from dedicating the necessary time and attention to complete the task as expected.*
- *I understand the importance of the request but I have already committed to other high-priority projects that demand my immediate attention. Is there a possibility of delegating this task to someone else?*
- *I'm sorry, I'm not the best fit for that task. I'd be more than willing to assist in finding a suitable alternative or provide guidance to the person who takes it on.*
- *I'm sorry but I don't have the bandwidth to take on this task at the moment. Perhaps we can discuss how we can redistribute workload or adjust priorities to ensure it gets done effectively.*
- *I appreciate your understanding that I need to focus on my current responsibilities.*

Key points

Most staff like to help others.

However, if we say yes to too many things we won't be effective.

Use the six approaches listed to say 'no'.

Always be polite and respectful when saying 'no'.

It can be even more challenging to say 'no' to your supervisor.



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