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| Communication Skills: Saying “No” Politely |
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| It is difficult in any language and culture to tell someone “No” when they offer us something, invite us somewhere or ask us to do something for them. It is easier if we don’t care if we offend the person. We can simply say “No” and that is the end of it. However, if we have to say “No” to a friend, colleague, or anyone we DON’T want to offend, we have to be less direct. Here are some suggestions.Someone offers you something (a drink, food, a gift) and you want to refuse.* No, thank you.
* No, but thanks anyway.
* No, but thank you for the offer.
* I would love some but…..

Someone invites you out to an event and you can’t go.* I’m sorry. I am really busy.
* I’m sorry. I don’t have the time right now.
* I’m sorry. I wish I could but…
* I appreciate the offer, but…..
* Thank you for thinking of me, but….
* Unfortunately, I won’t be able to make it/attend because….
* Maybe another time. I’ve got a lot on my plate right now.
* Perhaps another time.
* I have another commitment, but I really appreciate the invitation/offer.
* That’s a great idea, but I’m just not sure if I can fit it in right now.
* Let me check my schedule and get back to you.
* I’ll have to see. I’m not sure what else I have planned.

Someone asks you to do something that you can’t or don’t want to do.* I’d love to help out but….
* I’m sorry. I just don’t have the time right now.
* I wish I could, but I have other commitments.
* I’d like to, but I have other responsibilities/engagements/things to do.
* I’ll have to see. I’m not sure what else I have planned.
* Let me check my schedule and get back to you.
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*A. Underline the different ways that the people in this dialogue say “No”.*

Jen: Do you guys want to grab something to eat, and catch a movie after?

Dianne: I’d like to, but I have so much work to do. Thanks anyway.

Sam: I wish I could, but my Mother’s birthday party is tonight. Maybe another time. Hey, do you want to come over and help me decorate for the party?

Jen: I’d love to but I am absolutely NO good at decorating. I’ll call you guys next week.

*B. Imagine you are hosting a celebration or other event. Decide what kind of event you are hosting and when it will be. Mingle with your classmates and invite them to your event. Politely refuse any invitations you get. Don’t feel badly when your classmates decline your offer.*

*C. Write e-mails saying “No” in the following situations.*

1. Your friend has invited you to their wedding.

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2. Your friend has asked if you want to go to a concert with them tomorrow night.

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3. You mother wants you to come home for Christmas.

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