

HOW TO SAY NO: CHECKLIST

1. **Get clear on your own priorities.** My priorities are: existing client work, marketing and developing Copper Boom, my family, my home, and my health. There are specifics within that, but it makes it very easy to see what I want to have time, energy and money for.
2. **Be clear that you're going to start saying no to anything that doesn't make the list.** Once you have your list, you have a reference point. Something that you created in a calm moment, not the heat of the moment when you receive the email or the phone call and can get sideswiped by old habits.
3. **Share your "yes" list.** This can be helpful with family, friends and staff members. If you're going through a big change or finding that you're overwhelmed, it can be really helpful to let loved ones and the people involved know upfront, before you start saying no to things you usually say yes to.
4. **Start practicing AND understand that no is a complete sentence.** We often think we have to justify saying no, but we don't. We might put a "thank you" on the end, but we don't have to apologise for not meeting someone's expectations or give an excuse. Start practicing saying no in a way that feels comfortable to you, even to small things.
5. **Let go of guilt.** This one is an ongoing practice. Because we've been brought up and conditioned and generally expected to say yes to everything. Because fear and guilt sound the same, and are both trying to keep you safe in a very old-school sort of way. You might find physically shaking off guilt is helpful, when you're feeling it. You might find it helpful to read some of the statements below. You might need to breathe through it and look back at your "yes" list to remind yourself that you're really saying yes to those things.

Read more at:

- thejennyhyde.com/heres-the-thing-saying-no
- randibuckley.com/healthy-boundaries-for-kind-people

HOW TO SAY NO: WORDS TO USE

I always find it helpful to think about the actual wording I'm going to say to people. It helps me to feel confident in dealing with requests off the cuff (like on a phone call or face to face), and like the "yes" list, I create them outside the heat of the moment, so I know I can trust them.

Here are some wording suggestions:

- Thank you for thinking of me! This isn't something I can commit to right now.
- I need to consider my current schedule. Can I get back to you in a day / week?
- I'm currently prioritising my business / family / health and can't take on extra commitments for the foreseeable future.
- No.
- Thanks for your email. This isn't a good fit for me. I hope you find someone else who can do the project justice. Good luck with it!
- I'm not a specialist in _____ so this project isn't something I can take on.
- This isn't an option for me.
- I'd love to, but my priorities lie elsewhere right now.
- I have to say no. Thank you for the opportunity.
- Thanks for the suggestion. I'm not in a position to take it up.
- That isn't an option for us. (This one's particularly good for staff, when you don't want to say why.)
- Thanks for the suggestion! I need to consider it in context of our other designs and what we're trying to create. (For feedback on creative suggestions.)
- That doesn't fit with what I'm imagining. What I'd LOVE is _____.

Notice that these responses are short and sweet! It will feel awkward saying them (or writing them) at first, especially if you're used to saying yes and/or explaining yourself. Know that they're enough: short, sweet and respectful. No apologies for committing to yourself, and no excuses.

I also recommend that you don't say "maybe later" if you don't mean it. If you're never going to say yes to something in a billion years, don't give someone false hope.