

# FuckNotes

fill-in-the-blanks exercises to help you say no  
when you CAN'T, SHOULDN'T or  
JUST DON'T WANT TO say yes

from the book *F\*ck No!* by  
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*New York Times* bestselling author of  
*The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a Fuck,*  
*Get Your Shit Together, You Do You, and Calm the Fuck Down*



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Do you think it's too hard to say no? Do you find yourself saying yes all the time, because you can't find the words to form a polite decline?

Then you're in luck, because I would be delighted to put them in your mouth.

Welcome to FuckNotes: fill-in-the-blank templates that will help you craft a *no* best suited to your individual situation. I've included a set of three at the end of each chapter in my new book, *Fuck No!: How To Stop Saying Yes When You Can't, You Shouldn't, or You Just Don't Want To*, but I decided to collect them all here to make your life easier. That's just the kind of gal I am.

This booklet includes customizable examples of how you might say no to:

- **Invitations**
- **Favors**
- **Work and other Professional Transactions**
- **Romantic Partners**
- **and Family!**

Keep in mind that *Fuck No!* includes lots of specific detail on how to determine and craft your no's—especially how to set boundaries in the first place so that people will stop asking you for things they

know you can't, shouldn't, or don't want to give them. It also has tips on how to deal with feelings of guilt and obligation, and how to deliver your no's without looking like (or being) an asshole—but as a quick-and-dirty resource, these FuckNotes ought to get you on the right track.

So shake out your pencils and sharpen your tongue. . .

Yes is on *no*-tice.

# INVITATIONS

*fancy fêtes, informal gatherings, opening nights, shamanic rituals, and joining the club*

Gather 'round, boys and girls, while I build my case for why every invitation issued in your name is not one to which you must reply *yes*.

**Exhibit A:** Did you know that “invitation” comes from the Latin *invitare*, which means “to invite, treat, entertain”? On the face of it, that’s a nice thing . . . if you want to be invited, treated, and entertained and are able to accept. But just as it’s a host’s prerogative to make the offer, it’s yours to pass it up.

**Exhibit B:** Let’s say someone “invites” you to their wedding, their kid’s preschool graduation, or their bimonthly drum circle in the park and they make it clear that they expect you to say nothing other than *Yes, yes, a million times yes!* This inviter is behaving like a king or queen who demands a special showing of a play because they want to see it under circumstances that are enjoyable and convenient for them—not necessarily for the twenty-two performers of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* who thought they had a midsummer night off this week.

That is not an invitation; that is a command performance.

**Exhibit C: FUCK. THAT. SHIT.** I understand why you might think saying no to invitations is difficult. I'm telling you it doesn't have to be. From black-tie galas to casual meet-ups, or invitations to go on a date, join a club, a committee, or a softball league, each scenario may be different, but the mechanics of RSVP'ing remain the same: if you can't, shouldn't, or don't want to go—you can just say no.

## FuckNotes: Invitations Edition

Gather the following:

- The event you've been invited to
- A conflicting event, if any (optional)
- A bad feeling you do not wish on the inviter
- An expression of support for the inviter (e.g., "love you," "am proud of you")
- Personal issues that preclude your attendance, if any (optional)
- A positive adjective

Then, mix 'n' match to form your no. It's that easy!

## If you CAN'T

Alas, I can't come to your \_\_\_\_\_  
event you're invited to

[because I have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_]. I hope  
conflict, if any

you won't be \_\_\_\_\_, you know I  
bad feeling

\_\_\_\_\_. Have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ time!  
expression of support/  
love/etc. positive adjective

## If you SHOULDN'T

Unfortunately, I won't be able to make it to

your \_\_\_\_\_. [\_\_\_\_\_ make(s)]  
event you're invited to personal issue, if any

it difficult for me to do this kind of thing.]

Have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ time!  
positive adjective

## If you JUST DON'T WANT TO

Hey, sorry I can't make it to your

\_\_\_\_\_, but I appreciate the invite and  
event you're invited to

I hope you have a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ time!  
positive adjective

# FAVORS

*free advice, small loans, and big asks of all varieties*

I want you to know that if you have the time, energy, money, and desire to do someone a favor, that is really kind of you, and you should be commended for it. You're the best! But I also want you to know that declining to do a favor—for someone you love or live with or for a stranger in the hotel lobby—doesn't automatically make you an unkind person.

In fact, I hope that if you are an unkind person you are not reading my book, because I don't want your money. Unkind people can suck it.

I simply doubt very much that you can say yes all the time—whether to easy errands and extensive physical labor; quick cash infusions and big-time bailouts; or requests for professional or ew-that's-way-too-personal advice. Nor should you be expected to. And the same goes for *offers* of favors which you may not wish you accept, because not everybody wants another piece of pie, Gretchen, no matter how famous the old family recipe.

# FuckNotes: Favors Edition

Gather the following:

- Expression of sympathy or regret/apology (e.g., “Wish I could help” or “Sorry”)
- The favor you’ve been asked to do
- An honest, polite reason why you can’t/shouldn’t do it (optional)
- Offer to help another time (optional)
- Alternate solution to get the favor done



## If you CAN'T

\_\_\_\_\_, but I can't \_\_\_\_\_  
expression of sympathy/apology                      favor you've been asked to do

[because I \_\_\_\_\_]. Maybe you could  
reason why you can't

try \_\_\_\_\_? [Or if you're flexible, I  
alternate solution

could help you \_\_\_\_\_.]  
alternate timeframe

## If you SHOULDN'T

\_\_\_\_\_, but I'm not able to \_\_\_\_\_  
expression of sympathy/apology                      favor you've been asked to do

[because I \_\_\_\_\_]. Maybe you could  
reason why you shouldn't do it

try \_\_\_\_\_ instead? Good luck!  
alternate solution

## If you JUST DON'T WANT TO

\_\_\_\_\_, but that's not going to work  
expression of sympathy/apology

for me. Maybe you could try \_\_\_\_\_  
alternate solution

instead? Good luck!

# WORK & OTHER PROFESSIONAL TRANSACTIONS

*bosses, clients, coworkers, customers,  
and vendors, oh my!*

Now let's tackle a subset of no's that can affect your calendar and quality of life, as well as your career trajectory, your reputation, and your bank account. These declines can be deployed anywhere from a corner office in Corporate America or from behind the bar at your local java joint. After all, a problem client is a problem client—be they attached to a six-figure account or a yappy Maltipoo that wants to drink from the staff watercooler.

There are plenty of scenari-nos in which coworkers, clients, and bosses might be asking too much of you. You need to be able to say nay to keep them at bay—or perhaps to reset the bar in your favor. Guess what? While refusing invitations and declining to do favors may result in you having to do, spend, or otherwise exert yourself less—in a business context, saying no can also get you more: such as money, autonomy, perks, or a two-for-one deal on belt bags. Let's hear it for *no*-gotiating!

Of course, you can go ahead and say yes whenever it makes sense to you—like doing something a little outside your job description to prove to your boss that you have mad skillz, or giving a client a discount now to keep them coming back later. But if you can't, shouldn't, or just don't want to—if the rewards of refusal far outweigh the risks of assent—then it's a Pro No, bro.

## FuckNotes: Business Edition

Gather the following:

- A polite salutation (i.e., “Dear Jim” or “Good morning”)
- The thing you've been offered or asked to do
- A reason why you can't/shouldn't do it (optional)
- Phrase describing the completion of the offer/task (e.g., “squared away,” “taken care of,” “sorted out”)
- A polite closing (e.g., “Sincerely” or “Regards”)



but I wish you all the best in getting this

\_\_\_\_\_.  
phrase describing completion

\_\_\_\_\_.  
polite closing

\_\_\_\_\_  
your name

## If you JUST DON'T WANT TO

\_\_\_\_\_.  
polite salutation

Unfortunately, \_\_\_\_\_ won't be possible. I'm sorry I couldn't be of more assistance

whatever you've been  
offered/asked to do

on this one, but I wish you all the best in

getting this \_\_\_\_\_.  
phrase describing completion

\_\_\_\_\_.  
polite closing

\_\_\_\_\_  
your name

# PARTNERS

*sex, money, communication, division of  
labor, and back waxing*

Whether you have, had, and/or expect to have a romantic partner again someday, you know that such relationships come with requests and expectations beyond and different from those of bosses, coworkers, friends, or roommates.

For example: “Do you want to raise our kids Catholic?”

Or: “Can I interest you in Reverse Cowgirl?”

When you’re intimate with someone—living, sleeping, sexing, eating, pet-owning, co-parenting—it might seem like you have no boundaries left. Or that there can’t or shouldn’t be any boundaries, because what’s love if not granting another person the key to your heart and your Gates of Hell No?

Whoa there, partner! ALL relationships thrive on normal, healthy boundaries. From mutual financial decisions to non-mutual interests, shared tasks, and gross asks, there are any number of situations in which you must, should, or want to say no to your boo. Here’s a totally platonic cheat sheet to get you started.

# FuckNotes: Partners Edition

Gather the following:

- Term of endearment (e.g., “Babe” or “Snookums”)
- Thing you’ve been asked to do
- Corresponding verb
- An alternate suggestion/solution
- An alternate timeframe in which you could do it (optional)

## If you CAN'T

I'm, sorry \_\_\_\_\_, but I can't \_\_\_\_\_  
term of endearment verb

\_\_\_\_\_. Maybe we/you could \_\_\_\_\_?  
thing you've been asked to do alternate suggestion/solution

[Or if it can wait, I'd be happy to do it in

\_\_\_\_\_.]

alternate time frame

## If you SHOULDN'T

I'm, sorry \_\_\_\_\_, but that's not a good  
term of endearment

idea for me. Maybe we/you could \_\_\_\_\_?  
alternate suggestion/solution

[I don't mind if you \_\_\_\_\_  
verb thing you've been asked to do

without me though!]



## If you JUST DON'T WANT TO

My dear sweet \_\_\_\_\_, I really  
term of endearment

don't want to do that. [I don't mind if you

\_\_\_\_\_ without me though!]  
verb thing you've been  
asked to do

# FAMILY

*parents, siblings, extended family,  
children, in-laws, and everything  
they want from you all life long*

Ultimately, your family are just people, and it's okay to say no to them.

After all, if you prick them, do they not bleed? If you tickle them, do they not laugh? And if you politely decline to attend your cousin's wedding, did they not literally give you the option to say no right there on the RSVP card?

They so do, and they so did.

Lucky for you, I happen to be very good at saying no to my family. I am also very good at saying no to my husband's family and to our nieces and nephews—and so far I haven't been disowned, disinherited, divorced, or asked to leave anyone's house after honestly and politely telling their four-year-old, "No, I do not want to play *Cars*."

So in this final round of FuckNotes, prepare to tailor your various, sundry, and eminently justifiable no's into a one-size-fits all explanation for some of the most special—and especially demanding—people in your life.

# FuckNotes: Family Edition

You will need:

- A salutation (e.g., “Dear” or “Hey”) and your family member’s name or appellation (e.g., “Walter” or “Dad”)
- Their request/demand/offer
- Phrase for fulfilling their request/demand/offer (e.g., “take you up on this” or “be there for you”)
- A reason you can’t do it (optional)
- An adjective that is the *opposite* of how you’re worried they’ll feel when you say no
- An alternative to their request (optional)
- An expression of disappointment (e.g., “Bummer,” “This sucks,” or “Oh shit!”)
- A positive verb describing your feelings for this family member

## If you CAN'T

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_!  
appropriate salutation for this family member, and their name

I wish I could \_\_\_\_\_, but sadly I can't  
phrase for fulfilling their request/demand/offer

[because \_\_\_\_\_]. Please don't be \_\_\_\_\_.  
adjective opposite of how you worry they will feel                      reason why you can't

I love you!

[P.S. Maybe we could \_\_\_\_\_ instead some-  
alternative to their request  
time soon?]

## If you SHOULDN'T

\_\_\_\_\_, but I'm going to have to say no to  
expression of disappointment

\_\_\_\_\_. I hope you understand—it doesn't  
their request/demand/offer

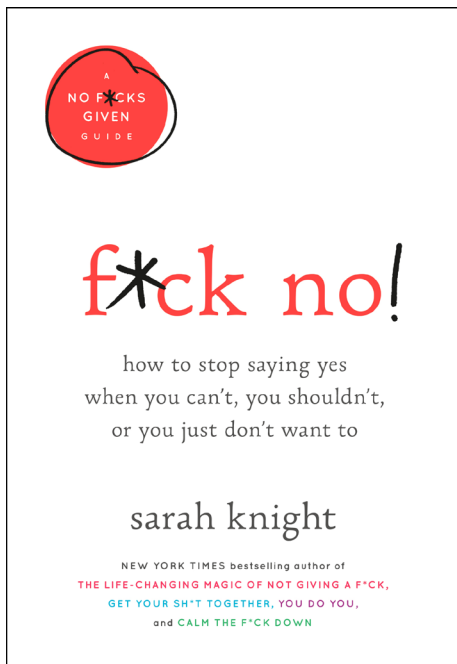
mean I don't \_\_\_\_\_ you!  
verb describing your feelings for them

## If you JUST DON'T WANT TO

I have to pass on \_\_\_\_\_. Love you, though!  
their request/demand/offer

Talk soon. XOXO

If you liked *FuckNotes*, you'll love



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"Self-help to swear by." —*Boston Globe*

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