

Boundary Setting Scripts

Cheat Sheet



Word-for-word lines for saying no kindly and meaning it - at work, with family, and in the group chat - plus the one technique for when people push back.

1 FIND THE LINE YOU NEED

2 SAY IT WARMLY, ONCE

3 RESIST ADDING REASONS

1 Saying no at work

A LIMIT STATED PLAINLY IS NOT A CONFESSION

THE CAPACITY TRUTH

"I don't have room to take that on and still do my current work well."

One honest sentence about your real limit. No fake apology, no invented crisis.

THE TRADE-OFF QUESTION

"I can do that, but something else will have to wait. Which of these should move?"

Turns an impossible yes into a priorities decision - and hands that decision back.

THE NOT-NEVER

"I can't this week. Ask me again for next month - I'd genuinely like to help."

A real later beats a resentful now. Only offer it if you mean it.

2 Family and friends

WARMTH AND NO CAN LIVE IN ONE SENTENCE

THE WARM NO

"I love that you thought of me, and I can't make it this time."

Notice the "and", not "but". Both halves are true, and neither cancels the other.

THE TOPIC CLOSE

"I'm not discussing my body today. Tell me about your trip instead - how was it?"

Close one door, open another. Swap in kids, money, dating - whatever gets poked at.

THE VISIT LIMIT, SET IN ADVANCE

"We'd love to come, and we'll need to head out by eight."

A limit named beforehand is information. Named mid-visit, it can feel like a verdict.

3 When they push back: the broken record

SAME CALM SENTENCE, EVERY ROUND

Pick one clear sentence and **repeat it, warmly, without adding new reasons**. Every fresh justification is a fresh handle to argue with. Repetition gives the argument nothing to grab.

YOU ***"I can't lend money right now."***

THEM ***"It's only until Friday - you know I'm good for it."***

YOU ***"I hear you, and I can't lend money right now."***

Keep your tone as kind on round three as on round one. You are not winning an argument; you are declining to have one.

4 Digital boundaries

SAY IT ONCE SO YOU NEVER APOLOGIZE AGAIN

THE REPLY-TIME RESET

"Heads up - I'm slower on messages these days. If something's urgent, call me."

Sent once, this replaces a hundred "sorry for the late reply" messages. An unread text is not an emergency.

LEAVE LOUDLY, NOT SUDDENLY

"I'm muting this chat for a bit to clear some headspace. Nothing personal - I'll catch up when I'm back."

One line spares you weeks of "are you mad at us?". Vanishing quietly invents a story; naming it kindly tells the true one.

WORTH REMEMBERING

The guilt that follows

Expect a wave of guilt right after a healthy boundary. It doesn't mean the boundary was wrong - it usually means it was overdue. Guilt is the sound of an old habit objecting to a new rule, not a verdict on your character. Let it be there without obeying it. It fades faster every time you hold the line.

