



# How to turn down plans without hurting anyone

Cut out the card along the dashed line (6 by about 4 inches). Say one line, then stop and listen. Use your own words when they come.

## Turning down plans kindly

1. Thank them first: "Thanks for thinking of me."
2. Say a clear no. One short true reason is plenty.
3. Offer another date only if you'll really keep it.
4. Unsure? Give a date you'll answer by.
5. Backing out late? Own the inconvenience.
6. Most people mind a kind no less than you expect.

## All the lines, and when to use them

**Thank you for thinking of me. I can't make Saturday, but I'd love to hear how it goes.** (The everyday decline for a friend's party or dinner. Gratitude first, a clear no, and warm interest in the event itself.)

**I'm going to sit this one out. It's been a long week and I'd be terrible company.** (You are free but genuinely depleted. A short, true reason is enough; you do not owe a full account.)

**I can't do the concert, but I'm free for coffee next Thursday morning. Want to?** (You want to see the person but not at this event. Only offer it if you would actually show up.)

**I know this dinner matters to you. Would it work if I came for the first hour of drinks and skipped the meal?** (Your partner's work event or a family gathering where a full no would hurt but a full yes is too much. A partial yes is a real option.)

**I'm going to step back from book club for now. It's not about the group. I just don't have room for a monthly thing this season.** (A recurring invitation you want to stop accepting. Saying it once clearly is easier on everyone than dodging every month.)

**Ah, wish I could! It's my niece's recital that night. Have the best time.** (A quick text reply to a casual group invite. Light tone, real reason, no essay.)

**Can I tell you by Wednesday? I don't want to say yes and then flake.** (You are honestly unsure. Giving a firm answer date respects their planning more than a hopeful "maybe.")

**I'm so sorry to do this late, but I can't make it tonight. I know you planned around me, and the next round is on me.** (You already said yes and now have to back out. Own the inconvenience directly instead of minimizing it.)

## Phrases to avoid

**"Maybe! I'll try to make it."**: When you already know the answer is no, a maybe keeps them planning around you and makes the eventual no worse.

**"Ugh, I hate those kinds of parties.":** It turns your no into a judgment of their event. Decline the plan, not their taste.

**"I'm so, so sorry, I feel awful, it's just that...":** Heavy apology for an ordinary no tells them it is a bigger deal than it is, and puts them in the position of comforting you.

**Silence (leaving the invite on read):** No answer often stings more than a clear no, because the inviter is left guessing. A one-line reply is enough.

If you are afraid of your partner, scripts are not the answer: call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. In danger, call 911.