



Office of
International
Education

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Just Say No!

The freedom of speech that Americans have become accustomed to has established a way of communicating that is sometimes seen as very DIRECT. There is a certain amount of flexibility that Americans have when speaking with each other. Directness while communicating with others is very acceptable and sometimes expected.

DO NOT FEEL BAD ABOUT SAYING NO!

In some countries, open rejection or disagreement might be considered rude. This is not the case in the US. Here it is quite normal to disagree openly. Therefore, the following scenarios have been provided in order to give you a better idea of how to “say no” when you find yourself in one of these situations:

Telemarketing

You may get phone calls from people wanting to sell you things or wanting you to give money to a charity:

- Telephone companies might try selling you cheap long distance calls
- Marketing companies or telephone surveys might ask questions for statistics, or try to sell products
- Credit card companies may try to give you credit cards
- Telemarketers may call to sell products such as vitamins or exercise equipment, and offer to enter you in a competition for free prizes if you buy today! (Sometimes they might send you something in the mail saying you’ve won a prize. This is just a trick to get you to buy something.)

The people who call may ask for your personal information without telling you why they are asking. They might also keep talking without giving you the chance to talk and explain things that you don’t understand. They will also try to keep you on the phone as long as possible. This is their job. Do not give strangers your personal information (Social Security number, bank account information, address, date of birth) unless you initiated the call and you are confident that they have a legitimate need for the information. For example, if you call your bank with a question about your account, it’s fine to provide your personal information so they know that you are the account holder. However if someone calls or emails you saying they are from your bank and asks personal information, do not provide it. They are probably not from your bank. Legitimate businesses will not contact you and ask you provide your personal information.

You can take proactive steps to prevent these types of phone calls. Sign up for the National Do Not Call Registry (<https://www.donotcall.gov/default.aspx>) to prevent telemarketers from calling you.

Until the “Do Not Call” registry takes effect, you can say, “No thank you!” and hang-up the telephone. Don’t stay on the phone any longer once you have said it. If these people come to your door, just say, “NO thanks!” and close your door. If they email you, delete the message or report it as “spam”.

Religion

People you have met or people you see on campus may try to get you to visit or join their church. They may invite you to one of their organization’s events or give you books and magazines about their religion. What you can do if you don’t wish to attend their meetings or church services is simply say “No thank you.” It’s not rude, and they shouldn’t get angry. Even if the person has been a good friend to helped you in some way, you have the right to not attend a church service or meeting if you don’t want to.

Begging

As classes get underway, it is very possible that you will have an encounter with a beggar. Beggars sometimes ask for money from students walking along Craig Street or other nearby streets. As poor as they may seem, you have the right to not give them anything if you don’t want to. If you don’t wish to give them anything, you can say:

“Sorry, I don’t have any change.”
“No thanks.”

When you have said what you want to say, keep walking to wherever it is you want to go.

Dating

When you first start interacting with Americans, it might seem a little awkward in the way they joke around and socialize. Someone you meet may find an interest in you, or you might find an interest in them. So if you are interested, how do you make the first move, and if you’re not interested how do you tell that person?

If you like them:

Tell them that you have enjoyed getting to know them and ask them if they would like to get dinner or a coffee sometime. It is alright to be direct in these cases. Most Americans find this difficult too.

If you don’t like them:

When they ask to see you sometime, simply tell them “Probably not, but thank you.”

If you want to break things off or if you are not interested in having sex with someone who is pressuring you:

Tell them directly what you want, do not hesitate to be direct--say “no”. Don’t be afraid to say what you feel or else they may assume you are still interested.

Whatever you encounter that makes you feel uncomfortable, remember that you have the right to say no and do not hesitate to ask for help.