

# Communication, Day 5: Saying “NO”

Special Education: Secondary, Lesson # 12

## **Student Learning Objectives:**

---

To be able to...

1. Say something caring
2. Refuse – say “No”
3. State their decision or suggest an alternative

## **Materials Needed:**

---

Transparencies – steps for saying “No”, case study, starter statements  
One set of saying “No” roleplay cards  
One copy of the worksheet for each student

## **Agenda:**

---

1. Introduce the concept
2. Different ways to say NO
3. Saying No to a friend
4. Case study
5. Worksheet
6. Saying “No”
7. Optional summary activity

Sometimes we are asked to do things we don't want to do. At these times, it's important to be able to refuse firmly and gracefully. In this lesson, students will learn about their right to refuse, about the importance of effective refusing skills, and about practical techniques and skills involved in saying "No".

## Activities:

**"This lesson is about how to say 'No'."**

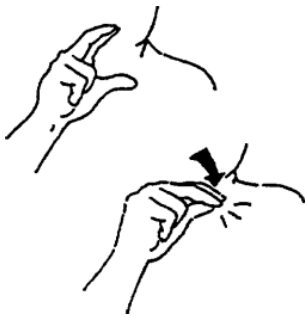
**Emphasize and practice actually saying "NO" whether it be verbal or not. Shaking the head, or leaving the room are other ways of saying "no" firmly.**

**Have students stand and use body language to demonstrate a BIG "NO".**

**Then have them be quiet and hesitant when saying "no".**

**Point out the differences.**

**Learn to say "No" in ASL, American Sign Language.**



**Draw or paint the ASL word for "No".**

### 1. Introduce the Concept

- A. Introduce this lesson by telling students:  
*"It's not only important to know how to ask for what you want. It's also important to know how to turn other people down assertively, when they ask you for something that you don't want to give, or offer you some thing you don't want to take."*
- B. Explain, *"If this happens to you, the only thing you really need to say is "NO" (or "No thanks"). You don't need to explain or defend your decision. 'No' is fine."*

### 2. Different ways to "NO"

- A. Discuss with the class that there are many ways we can say "no" to people. The easiest way is to simply say "NO." Write the word "NO" on the blackboard in LARGE letters. Have the class stand and practice saying "NO" in a loud voice.
- B. Now write the word "no" on the board in very small (but legible) letters. Ask the class to say "no" in a very soft voice. Point out how different these two "no's" sounded. One would likely be listened to - the other might be ignored.
- C. Ask students to model non-verbal ways of saying "No". Discuss the impact our body language has on the message we send. Roleplay an assertive "No" using only body language. Roleplay a non-assertive "No" using only body language. Discuss what happens to the assertiveness of the message if the person saying "No" is smiling. Is the message still effective? Discuss polite, pleasant ways of adding body language to saying "No" that keep the "No" effective.

### 3. Saying "No" to a friend.

- A. Discuss with students that, *"Saying "No" to a friend can sometimes make people feel uncomfortable. You may be afraid that your friend will be angry or hurt by your "No". Remember that "No" by itself is really all you need*

*to say, but if you feel you want to say more, there are three steps you might take.”*

B. Tell students that the three steps are:

- 1. Say something caring.**
- 2. Refuse.**
- 3. State your decision.**

Project the Saying “No” steps transparency or write the steps on the blackboard or butcher paper.

**4. Case Study.**

A. Read the case study to your students and project the transparency:

*Jim was playing Nintendo with his friend Jack one afternoon after school. The boys were hanging around in Jack’s basement and time was passing. They were having a good time together, and at about 5:30, Jack’s mother came downstairs and said, “Hi Jim. Seems like you guys are having fun. Would you like to stay for dinner tonight? We’re having liver.” Jim hated liver. Absolutely hated it. But he didn’t know what to say. He didn’t want to hurt Jack’s mom’s feelings. He kind of wanted to stay for dinner. But he sure didn’t want to eat liver!*

**Roleplay the case study with a teaching assistant**

B. What should Jim do? Ask the class for suggestions.

Then, referring to the projected list of three steps for saying “No”, continue with the case study.

*Jim wasn’t sure what to say to Jack’s mother. He thought he would try out the three steps he’d learned in class.*

*Jim began with step #1. - say something caring.*

*“Thanks very much for asking me. It’s a nice invitation and I’m glad to be asked.”*

*The second step, Refuse - was a bit harder. Jim didn’t want to be rude. So he said, “I think I’d better say ‘no’ tonight.”*

*The third step, state your decision or suggest an alternative was easy. “My mom is expecting me for dinner so I’d better get home. Could I come a different night?”*

*Jack’s mom smiled and said, “Sure thing, Jim.*

*Tomorrow we’re having lasagna for supper - could you join us then? Why don’t you ask your mom tonight.”*

*“Sounds great!” said Jim. Lasagna was his favorite food. “Thanks! See you tomorrow.”*

**“What should Jim say?”**

C. Ask the class to think about the steps Jim took to say “No” to Jack’s mother. Point out that the “No” that Jim

used was somewhere in between the BIG “NO” and the little “no” on the board. Jim’s “No” was polite and courteous, but firm.

### 5. Worksheet

**Ask students to practice saying “No” non-verbally. Have students use hand mirrors and practice facial expressions and gestures that would tell someone they mean “No”. Ask them questions from the alternative worksheet.**

- A. Hand out the worksheet. Students could work individually, in pairs or as small groups facilitated by teaching assistants - choose the approach that best suits your students.
- B. Read and discuss the first situation. Post or project the starter statements for the three “Saying No” steps, so that students can refer to them as they complete the worksheet.  
*Remind students “You don’t have to give a reason for your refusal. If you trust the person not to argue with your decision, it’s okay to state your reason. But you never have to give a reason; it only gives the person something to argue about.”*
- C. Collect the worksheets and read the various responses students have come up with. Have a discussion, (without using names) about how many different ways there are to say “No”. Point out that it’s important to find a way that feels comfortable to you.

### 6. Saying “No” - Roleplay exercise

**Work one-on-one with some students to help them understand the situation on the game cards.**

**Have the students demonstrate how they would say “No”.**

- A. Make “saying NO” game cards, one set for each student. Hand them out, one card at a time, and have students consider individually or in partners, their thoughts about how to refuse.
  - B. Then you have two options:
    1. Collect the game cards and read them aloud, roleplaying as appropriate.
    2. Have students roleplay the responses they wrote on their own cards.
  - C. Have students discuss the effectiveness of various refusals, and discuss their “style” - what feels comfortable to them.
  - D. Repeat with the other three game cards.
7. **Optional summary activity.** Ask students to make a poster or collage of the word “No” in as many different languages as you can.

# Dear Trusted Adult,

**In class we talked about the importance of being able to assertively say “No” in a way that says we mean it, and is, at the same time, respectful of other people’s feelings.**

**We learned about and practiced a three step process. The steps are:**

1. Say something caring.
2. Refuse.
3. State your decision, or suggest an alternative.

Students were encouraged to try this technique in a variety of settings - including at home. It's important to be able to refuse assertively, to be able to say a in a way that is respected. We've included some starter statement suggestions that were studied in class. It might be helpful to post these and refer to them when practicing saying "NO".

Steps for saying “NO”

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Say something caring</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">It's nice of you to offer, but...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Thanks for asking, but...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I like you, but...</p> | <p>2. Refuse</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">No.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">No, sorry.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">No, thanks.</p>  |
| <p>3. State your decision</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I'd rather...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I'm not going to...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I don't believe in...</p>                         | <p>or suggest an alternative...</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Would you like to...?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">How about...?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Why not...instead?</p> |

You can support this learning by trying out the steps and the starter statements on the following roleplay situations:

- A friend asks if you want to go to a movie on Saturday night. You already have plans. You say...
- A friend asks to borrow your favorite sweater. You are concerned that the sweater will stretch because your friend is much bigger than you are. You say...
- You are offered a second helping of dessert at a party. You have been watching your weight and although the dessert is tasty, you don't really want more. You say...

If you have any questions or comments, please call me.

Sincerely,

---

Teacher, Principal or Nurse

**NOTE: All Trusted Adult Exercises are Optional.**

## **Saying “NO”**

---

**1. Say something caring.**

**2. Refuse.**

This is the most important step.  
Make sure you include the word, “NO!”

**3. State your decision or suggest an alternative.**

## **Steps for saying “NO”**

---

### **1. Say something caring.**

It's nice of you to offer, but...

Thanks for asking, but...

I like you, but...

### **2. Refuse**

No.

No, sorry.

No, thanks.

### **3. State your decision.**

I'd rather...

I'm not going to...

I don't believe in...

I've decided not to...

### **or suggest an alternative...**

Would you like to...?

How about...?

Why not ... instead?

## Worksheet

---

1. Dear Abby,  
My best friend smokes cigarettes. He can do what he thinks is right, but I sure don't want to smoke. So far, he hasn't asked me if I want to try smoking too, but what should I say if he does ask? I don't want to lose a friend.
2. signed Gum breath

Dear Gum Breath,

---

---

---

---

---

---

3. Dear Abby,  
Yesterday my girlfriend offered to touch me in a way I don't feel right about. I changed the subject. What do I do if she tries again? I don't want her to think I'm a baby or anything.  
- signed Just Not Ready

4. Dear Just Not Ready,

---

---

---

---

---

---



## **Alternative Worksheet**

---

- Using mirrors, have students examine the way they look when they say “No.”
  - Ask them the following questions and have them use facial expressions and body language to clearly say “No.”
  - Contrast the “no’s” with some “yes’s” to see how different “yes” looks.
- 
1. A stranger, (someone you don’t know) drives by when you are waiting for the bus. He opens the window of the car and says, *Do you want to go for a ride with me?*
  2. An acquaintance (you know them but they are not really a friend) sits down beside you at the bus stop. He puts his hand on your leg. What do you do?
  3. A friend asks you to go into the grocery store and takes a pack of gum. You know this is wrong. This is stealing. You say...
  4. The person who cuts your hair (a helper) asks if you want to go in the back room with her after your haircut and smoke some dope. You don’t want to. So you...
  5. Your mother offers you a second helping at dinner. You are full, so you say...
  6. A friend asks if you want to go shopping with her on Saturday. You have already made other plans, you tell her...

## Refusal Game Cards

---

<p>1. Your brother asks you for \$1.00 and you don't want to give it to him. You're saving it to pay for a record.</p> <p>A. Say something caring:</p> <p>B. Refuse:</p> <p>C. State your decision or suggest an alternative:</p>	<p>2. Your friend offers to massage your sore feet. They smell and you would be embarrassed.</p> <p>A. Say something caring:</p> <p>B. Refuse:</p> <p>C. State your decision or suggest an alternative:</p>
<p>3. Your friend wants to borrow your homework. You don't want to get in trouble for cheating.</p> <p>A. Say something caring:</p> <p>B. Refuse:</p> <p>C. State your decision or suggest an alternative:</p>	<p>4. Your mother offers to take you out to eat dinner at a restaurant. You've already been invited to eat at a friend's house.</p> <p>A. Say something caring:</p> <p>B. Refuse:</p> <p>C. State your decision or suggest an alternative:</p>

## Case Study Transparency

---

