

REFUSING POLITELY

A2-B1 | Functional language for declining requests and invitations

1 Useful phrase patterns

Use these phrases to say no clearly while staying polite and considerate.

I'm sorry, but I can't ...

I'm sorry, but I can't come tonight.

I'd like to, but ...

I'd like to, but I already have plans.

I don't think I can ...

I don't think I can stay late today.

Maybe another time?

Maybe another time? I am busy this weekend.

Thank you, but ...

Thank you, but I do not need any help.

I have other plans.

I have other plans on Saturday.

I'm afraid not.

I'm afraid not. I need to go home now.

Can we do it later?

Can we do it later? I am not free now.

2 Respond to the situations

Write one polite refusal for each situation.

1. A friend invites you to dinner tonight, but you already have plans with your family.

2. Your colleague asks you to stay late today, but you have an appointment.

3. A classmate asks if you want to go shopping this weekend, but you are busy.

4. Someone offers you more food, but you have already eaten enough.

5. A friend asks to borrow your car tomorrow, but you need it.

6. Your neighbour asks if you can help them now, but you are leaving for work.

7. A friend asks you to join an expensive trip, but it costs too much for you.

8. A group wants to meet this afternoon, but you are not free until the evening.

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A2-B1 | Suggested answers

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Possible answers

These are examples only. Other accurate and suitable refusals are also correct.

Encourage students to choose a phrase that suits the relationship and situation.

1. I'd like to, but I already have plans with my family tonight.

2. I'm sorry, but I can't stay late today because I have an appointment.

3. Maybe another time? I am busy this weekend.

4. Thank you, but I have eaten enough.

5. I'm sorry, but I can't lend you my car tomorrow because I need it.

6. I don't think I can help now because I am leaving for work.

7. I'd like to, but the trip is too expensive for me.

8. Can we do it later? I am not free until the evening.
