

Boundaries – the Big List.



Phrasing Work Boundaries

1. I would be glad to help with that but need your help prioritizing what I'm doing now because I won't be able to meet all my deadlines if I take on anything new. Could we look at my workload together?
2. Thanks for thinking of me to take this on. Could you clarify the deadline? Given all my assignments right now, I think I'd have to delegate a few of my current projects. Could you help me figure that out?
3. I wish I could help, but I have a commitment at 5:30pm that I can't change. I do have extra time tomorrow – would that help?
4. I want to let you know that I'm having to work every evening and weekend, just to keep up with all the deadlines. I'd like to see if there is some way we could problem-solve, and see if there are some adjustments that could be made...what are your thoughts?
5. It's important for all of us to be here on time so our meeting is productive. We need your input so I'd be grateful if you could be more punctual
6. I'm not comfortable discussing my personal life at work
7. It's great you're so enthusiastic in our meetings, and I just wanted to mention that when you interrupt, it's frustrating

Phrasing Boundaries for Relationships & Connections

8. I'm certain you didn't mean to, but when you said/did X, it hurt my feelings and wanted to let you know so it doesn't come between us
9. I'm upset about our argument. I'd like to talk about it but I'm not quite ready. Could we talk tomorrow?
10. I've enjoyed the time we've spent together, but our friendship isn't a good fit for me now. I hope you'll understand. And I wish you all the best
11. Thank you for asking. It's been a rough year, but I am doing better. (Then perhaps shift subjects)
12. It would be great to talk about it some other time because the support would be so helpful. Are you free for a coffee next week?
13. I appreciate your concern, that means a lot. It's not something I can speak about right now
14. If person persists in asking: As I said, I'm not able to talk about this now. Thanks for respecting that
15. I'm sure you understand how difficult that subject is for me. I appreciate your caring, but it's been a nice break to be so busy at work
16. This has been a painful few months, and it's still too hard to discuss. I appreciate you keeping a good thought for me
17. You're so kind to ask how I am. I need time to heal. Maybe at some point I'll feel ok talking about it
18. Lighthearted tease, with a smile: Well, that's quite a question! Not everyone would go there, Susan!
19. I just need some time alone right now
20. I wish I was free to help with that, but I have to decline
21. I'm not comfortable continuing this conversation right now
22. I want to hear what you are saying, but your angry tone is making it hard for me to listen. Could we start over?
23. When you made a joke about _____, it wasn't funny to me
24. You may not be aware that sometimes you tease me in a way that feels mocking and disrespectful. For example, when you said _____ it felt like a put-down
25. I'd really appreciate it if we didn't text or talk after 8pm as that's when I'm unplugging
26. I'm not comfortable sharing that information as I'm holding it in confidence
27. I realize this may disappoint you, but I have to decline your invitation

28. I'd love to help, but I'm already overextended
29. I'm flattered that you asked me to be part of that project, however I'm not able to take that on right now
30. It makes me uncomfortable when you speak unkindly about others
31. Please don't comment on my appearance/weight/lifestyle choices. It feels disrespectful and hurtful
32. I know you really want me to do _____, but I've already said I couldn't and it seems like you are pressuring me to change my mind
33. I'm not comfortable with that level of intimacy. I'd like to take things slowly
34. I'd be grateful if you could respect my privacy
35. Thank you, but I can't meet up at that time
36. I'm sad about the way you are speaking to me. It feels terrible
37. It's going to be impossible for me to stay in this conversation if you keep shouting
38. I've made my decision, and I'm ok with it. If I need any more input, I'll be sure to ask
39. I'm really sensitive about being touched or hugged unless someone asks first
40. I was told that you said _____ about me. Please don't talk about me to others. It's important to me that we can speak directly to each other if there's a problem
41. Sometimes you tell me things about others and I'd prefer that you didn't
42. Yes, it's true I am open about my mental health, but it is my information to share, not yours. Please don't do that again
43. I don't think anyone should apologize for being clear about having a particular boundary. Would you like to know more about why this boundary is important to me?
44. When you said _____, it invalidated my feelings and hurt me. My and your feelings are equally important.
45. I care about our relationship and think being clear about our different needs will strengthen our connection
46. Thank you for understanding as I express my needs
47. I trust that you'll understand and respect the boundaries I'm setting
48. Our friendship is important to me and I don't expect you to read my mind, which is why I am telling you what upset me
49. Your feelings matter, and that's why I'm being honest about my boundaries
50. It's important that we both feel safe and respected, so I'd like to talk to you about what happened yesterday
51. Right now I have to prioritize my work, so let's connect next month

52. This isn't a good time to talk, but thank you for calling. Is there a good time to call over the weekend?
53. Talking about that won't be helpful to me, thank you for understanding
54. No, thank you
55. Thanks for asking, but that isn't possible for me
56. I'll have to give some thought to what you said
57. I feel sad that you would say that
58. I prefer to avoid political discussions as they often become argumentative. Let's talk about something else

Responding to someone who sets a boundary with us:

“Thank you for letting me know how that made you feel. I’m sorry, and I understand. I’ll be more aware in the future (or “I won’t do that again”).

We've learned something, we make amends, and move on.

And everyone goes home feeling better.

