

Top Ten Refusal Skills for Teens

How to Say No and Keep Your Friends



Introduction

You may face many situations where others are encouraging you to do something risky, illegal, or unhealthy. How can you develop the ability to stand up for yourself?

Unfortunately, many teens wind up “going along” not because they want to, but simply because they don’t know how to respond in these situations. They are afraid of losing a friend, looking uncool, or being left out of the crowd. The trick is to practice “saying no” in a variety of ways and in a variety of situations, so you are prepared for anything

Here are ten ways you can reply to peer pressure. By learning a bunch of possible responses, you are more likely to be able to come up with one that fits the situation when the time arises. Role play some typical situations with friends or an adult you trust, and practice using each one. This will help you develop assertiveness skills as well as confidence.

1. **Make a joke.** Sometimes humor is the best way to respond to a situation, as it can lighten a serious mood. It can also divert attention away from you and onto something else.
2. **Give a reason why it's a bad idea.** Maybe you can't [smoke](#) because you want to be able to run the mile for the track team. Maybe you don't want to [drink](#) because you know someone who is an alcoholic and you can see how drinking has messed up their life. Backing up your refusal with evidence gives it more power.
3. **Make an excuse why you can't.** Maybe you have something else to do that will interfere. Or you have to be somewhere at a specific time. Or your mom will kill you. Whatever. But say it and stick to it.
4. **Just say no, plainly and firmly.** In some situations, just saying no without a lot of arguing and explaining is the best response. Just make sure you're "no" is a strong and determined one.
5. **Suggest an alternative activity.** Lots of kids wind up doing stuff they shouldn't because they lack other options. They're bored. By thinking of something better to do, you're offering everyone an "out." You just might be surprised who might take you up on it.
6. **Ignore the suggestion.** Pretend you didn't hear it, and change the topic to something else. Act like you don't think the idea was even worth discussing.
7. **Repeat yourself if necessary.** Sometimes it takes more than once, on more than one occasion. Just because someone asks more than once, that doesn't mean you have to cave.
8. **Leave the situation.** If you don't like where things are headed, you can take off. It might seem risky, but with you leading the way, other kids who really don't want to do it either just may follow you.
9. **Thanks, but no thanks.** You can be polite, but you still aren't interested. It just isn't something you're into.
10. **The power of numbers.** Make a pact with your friends to stick to your guns. Often, knowing that your friends will back you up can help you feel more comfortable being assertive. Sometimes "we" feels stronger than "I".

Source:

<https://www.umtsd.org/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&ModuleInstanceId=940&ViewID=7b97f7ed-8e5e-4120-848f-a8b4987d588f&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=1306&PageID=1758>