

Boundaries Scripts for Single Moms

What to Say When You Can't Say Yes

Dear Mama,

Let me guess: You just said "yes" to something you absolutely didn't have time for. Again.

Your ex needs you to switch weekends (again). Your mom wants you to host Thanksgiving. Your boss asked if you can cover someone's shift. The school needs a volunteer. Your friend needs a favor. Your kid wants another expensive activity.

And you? You said yes. Even though you're already running on empty.

Here's what nobody tells you: Boundaries aren't mean. They're survival.

You can't pour from an empty cup, and you can't be there for your kids if you're burnt out from being everything to everyone else.

This guide gives you the exact words to use when you need to say no—without guilt, without apology, and without losing your relationships.

Let's get your power back.

The Two Types of "No"

The "Guilty No"

"I'm so sorry, I wish I could, but I just can't right now, I feel terrible about this, maybe next time, I'm so sorry again..."

What it communicates: Please don't be mad at me. I feel bad. I might change my mind if you push.

Result: People push back. You feel worse. Sometimes you cave.

The "Confident No"

"I can't make that work, but I appreciate you thinking of me."

What it communicates: I've made a decision. It's not up for debate. I respect both of us enough to be clear.

Result: People respect your boundary (eventually). You feel empowered.

The Golden Rules of Boundary-Setting

Before we get to the scripts, memorize these:

- ✓ **You don't owe anyone an explanation.** "No" is a complete sentence.
- ✓ **"No" to them is "yes" to yourself and your kids.**
- ✓ **Guilt means you're breaking old patterns. That's growth, not failure.**
- ✓ **You're teaching your kids how to set boundaries by modeling it.**
- ✓ **People who love you will respect your boundaries. People who don't respect your boundaries don't love you properly.**

Now let's give you the words.

SCRIPTS FOR YOUR EX-PARTNER

When they ask to switch custody/visitation last minute:

✗ **Guilty No:**

"Ugh, I don't know... I already made plans but I guess I can try to move things around... this is really inconvenient though..."

✓ **Confident No:**

"That doesn't work for me this time. Let's stick to our regular schedule."

If they push:

"I understand you need flexibility, but I need consistency. The schedule works when we both stick to it."

When they want to negotiate parenting decisions via text at 11pm:

✓ Boundary Script:

"This is an important conversation. Let's discuss it [tomorrow during the day / this weekend when we exchange the kids]. I'm not available to hash this out right now."

If they keep texting:

"I'll respond tomorrow." (Then don't respond until tomorrow.)

When they try to guilt you about money/support/time:

✓ Boundary Script:

"I'm doing the best I can with what I have. I'm not discussing this further."

Alternative:

"If you have concerns about the custody agreement or support, we can address that through [mediation/lawyers/family court]. I'm not debating it in text messages."

When they criticize your parenting:

✓ Boundary Script:

"We have different parenting styles. I'm confident in my choices."

If they escalate:

"This conversation isn't productive. I'm done here." (Then actually be done.)

SCRIPTS FOR FAMILY (Parents, Siblings, In-Laws)

When they want to drop by unannounced or expect you to host:

✗ Guilty No:

"Well, the house is a mess and I'm really tired, but I guess you can come over..."

✓ Confident No:

"This weekend doesn't work for us. Let's plan something for [specific date] instead."

If they show up anyway:

"Hey! I wasn't expecting you. We're in the middle of something. Let's catch up later." (Don't let them in.)

When they offer unsolicited parenting advice:

✓ Boundary Script:

"I appreciate your concern, but I've got this."

If they persist:

"I didn't ask for advice. If I need help, I'll ask."

For the passive-aggressive version:

"I hear you." (Then do nothing. Don't defend your choices.)

When they expect you to attend every family event:

✓ Boundary Script:

"We can't make it, but have a great time!"

If they guilt trip you:

"I understand you're disappointed. We'll catch the next one."

If they say "but FAMILY":

"My first priority is my immediate family (me and my kids). That means sometimes we miss extended family events."

When they want to babysit but don't respect your rules:

✓ Boundary Script:

"Thank you for offering, but we're good. I'll let you know when I need help."

If they push:

"When the kids are with me, I make the rules. When they're with you, you don't follow them. So I'm keeping them with me."

SCRIPTS FOR SCHOOL/TEACHERS

When they ask you to volunteer (and you CAN'T):

Guilty No:

"I'm so sorry, I'm a terrible mom, I work full-time, I wish I could be there more..."

Confident No:

"I'm not able to volunteer this semester, but I appreciate all you do for the kids."

Alternative:

"I can't do in-person volunteering, but I'm happy to [send supplies / help prep materials at home]."

When they need you to attend a daytime meeting:

Boundary Script:

"I work during the day. Can we do a phone call at [time] or meet before/after school?"

If they say no:

"Then we'll need to make video/phone work. I can't leave work during business hours."

When they expect you to manage homework/projects beyond reasonable:

Boundary Script:

"I help [child's name] with homework, but I'm not able to oversee a project of this size. What support can the school provide?"

Translation: This is unreasonable. Fix it.

SCRIPTS FOR YOUR BOSS/COWORKERS

When they ask you to stay late/come in early/work weekends:

✗ Guilty No:

"I really can't, I have my kid, I'm so sorry, I know this is bad timing..."

✓ Confident No:

"I can't make that work with my schedule. Is there another solution?"

If they pressure you:

"I understand this is important. My availability is [your actual availability]. Let me know if that works."

When coworkers ask you to cover their shifts (constantly):

✓ Boundary Script:

"I can't this time."

If they keep asking:

"I need to keep my schedule consistent for childcare. I'm not able to be the go-to for shift coverage."

When your boss expects you to be "flexible" (aka work extra for no pay):

✓ Boundary Script:

"I'm committed to doing excellent work during my scheduled hours. I'm not available outside of [your hours]."

If they hint at "team player":

"I am a team player during the hours I'm here. My priority outside of work is my family."

SCRIPTS FOR FRIENDS

When they want to vent (but you're maxed out):

Guilty No:

"Yeah, I'm exhausted but go ahead, what's going on..."

Confident No:

"I love you, but I don't have the capacity for this right now. Can we talk this weekend?"

Alternative:

"I've got about 10 minutes. What's the short version?" (Then actually stop at 10 minutes.)

When they want you to go out (but you need to rest):

Boundary Script:

"I need a night in. Let's plan something for [next week/next month]."

If they say "you never come out anymore":

"I'm in a season where I need more downtime. It's not about you."

When they ask to borrow money:

Boundary Script:

"I'm not in a position to lend money."

Don't explain. Don't apologize. Don't offer alternatives.

If they push:

"My answer is no."

When they don't respect your time (late, cancels last minute, etc.):

✓ Boundary Script:

"I value our friendship, but I need you to respect my time. If we make plans, I need you to keep them or cancel with more notice."

If it happens again:

"This has happened a few times now. I'm going to step back from making plans until things are more reliable on your end."

SCRIPTS FOR YOUR KIDS

For Young Kids (Ages 3-8)

When they want something you can't afford:

✓ Boundary Script:

"That's not in our budget right now. Let's add it to your wish list for your birthday."

If they tantrum:

"I understand you're disappointed. The answer is still no."

When they don't want to follow your rules:

✓ Boundary Script:

"This is not a choice. You can [option A] or [option B]."

Example:

"This is not a choice. You can brush your teeth now or in 5 minutes. Which do you choose?"

When they play you against the other parent:

✓ Boundary Script:

"What Dad/Mom allows at their house is their choice. At my house, the rule is [your rule]."

For Tweens/Teens (Ages 9-17)

When they want expensive activities/items:

Boundary Script:

"I hear that you want this. It's not in the budget. If it's important to you, let's talk about how you could earn money toward it."

Alternative:

"I can contribute \$X. If you want it, you'll need to cover the rest."

When they want more screen time/freedom than you're comfortable with:

Boundary Script:

"I understand you feel ready for more freedom. I'm not comfortable with that yet. We can revisit this in [X months]."

If they argue:

"I've made my decision. This conversation is over."

When they compare you to other parents:

Boundary Script:

"Every family has different rules and different resources. This is what works for our family."

If they say "you're the worst mom ever":

"I know you're upset. My job isn't to be your favorite. It's to keep you safe and teach you to be a good human."

When they want to skip visitation with the other parent:

Boundary Script:

"I understand you don't want to go. The custody schedule is set by the court, and we need to follow it. If there's a serious problem, we can talk about it and figure out the next step together."

When they ask why you're single/when you'll date:

Boundary Script:

"That's private. What I will tell you is that I'm focused on our family right now, and if that changes, I'll talk to you about it."

WHAT TO DO WHEN PEOPLE PUSH BACK

They guilt trip you:

"Wow, I didn't realize you were so selfish."

"I guess I know where I stand with you."

"After everything I've done for you..."

Your Response:

Don't defend. Don't explain. Don't engage.

Say this:

"I understand you're upset. My answer is still no."

Then change the subject or end the conversation.

They try to negotiate:

"Just this once?"

"What if I...?"

"Can you at least...?"

Your Response:

Say this:

"I've already said no. I need you to respect that."

They freeze you out/silent treatment:

Your Response:

Let them.

This is manipulation. Do not chase them. Do not apologize. Do not cave.

People who love you will come back when they're ready. People who don't will show themselves out.

They say "you've changed":

Your Response:

Say this:

"You're right. I'm setting boundaries now. That's growth."

Your Boundary-Setting Action Plan

This Week:

1. Pick ONE person you need to set a boundary with
2. Choose your script from this guide
3. Practice saying it out loud 3 times (seriously, do this)
4. Say it to them
5. Notice how you feel afterward

This Month:

- Set one new boundary per week
- Journal about what feels hard and what feels empowering
- Celebrate every boundary you hold

Remember:

- The first boundary is the hardest
 - Guilt is temporary; resentment is forever
 - You're not responsible for other people's feelings
 - Your kids are watching you model self-respect
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The Truth About Boundaries

Setting boundaries doesn't mean you don't care about people. It means you care about yourself too.

You're not being selfish. You're being wise.

You're not being difficult. You're being clear.

You're not being mean. You're being honest.

And you're teaching your kids that they don't have to set themselves on fire to keep other people warm.

That's one of the greatest gifts you can give them.

What's Next?

This guide gives you the scripts. But here's what it doesn't give you:

- The confidence to say them without second-guessing yourself
- A plan for rebuilding your identity beyond "everyone's helper"
- The support system to hold you accountable when you slip
- The deeper work of figuring out WHY you struggle with boundaries
- Tools to handle the emotional aftermath when relationships shift

That's what we do inside Momma Freedom Academy.

We don't just give you scripts. We rebuild your entire relationship with boundaries, self-worth, and your right to take up space.

Because you deserve more than survival. You deserve a life where "no" doesn't feel like a dirty word.

You've got this, Mama.

Save this guide. Screenshot your favorite scripts. Text them to yourself. Tattoo them on your arm if you need to.

And the next time someone asks you for something you don't have to give?

Remember: "No" is a complete sentence.

— Your biggest cheerleader and fellow boundary-setter

Want more support? Visit mommafreesite.com to learn about Momma Freedom Academy, where we go deeper on building unshakeable confidence, financial independence, and the practical skills that change everything.