

What not to say

What to know / What to do instead

“It’s not fair.”	This can be perceived as complaining. Minor injustices are a part of life, including at work. So instead, be proactive: Focus on things you can change, and make a logical argument based on facts.
“That’s not my job.”	This statement implies a self-serving attitude. A request may seem inappropriate or even inconvenient, but it has nonetheless been made. So, show you are willing to contribute toward team success.
“No problem.”	Saying “no problem” when someone thanks you implies the situation could have been a problem under other circumstances, and it minimizes or dismisses the other person’s appreciation.
“I’ll try.”	This phrase implies you are not fully committed or convinced you will follow through and get something done, and it raises doubt or even mistrust in the mind of the other person.
“He’s lazy”, or “This project stinks.”	This kind of judgmental, name-calling comment really just reflects poorly on the speaker. Real concerns should be expressed objectively and tactfully.
“But we’ve always done it this way.”	This phrase implies resistance to change and makes the speaker appear inflexible, instead of an innovative problem solver who keeps an open mind.
“There’s nothing I can do.”	This phrase emphasizes the negative, and implies passivity. Instead, focus on what can be done.
“You should have...”	Use words that foster collaboration, rather than attempting to assign blame or find fault in others.
“You guys”	This casual term should be avoided in a business context.
“I may be wrong, but...”	When you discount what you are about to say, it de-emphasizes the significance of your contribution and can even lower your credibility in the eyes of others.
“Don’t you think?” / “Okay?”	Using words that show you are seeking validation suggest you are uncertain and lack confidence. Drop the hedging words, and just make your statement.
“I’m too busy for that.”	This is a dismissive phrase. If you’ve been asked to take on something over and above what’s already on your plate, respond in a way that indicates willingness while seeking input on what to prioritize.