



ONWARD HONESTLY BOOKS

Boundary & Ask Scripts

Plain language for asking for help, protecting your pace, and ending a conversation you did not agree to have.

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HOW TO USE THESE

A safe request names the task without giving away the decision.

After an unwanted change, two conversations get harder at exactly the same time: asking for what you need, and declining what you did not ask for.

Both get easier with language prepared in advance — not because a script makes you braver, but because it removes the work of composing a sentence while you are tired, watched, or caught off guard.

Use your own voice. Change every word if the wording does not sound like you. What matters is the shape underneath: **name the task, name the limit, leave room for the other person to say no.**

BEFORE YOU ASK

Check two things. Has this person earned access to this part of your life — do they keep confidences, accept “no,” and avoid turning help into leverage? And does the request have a clear edge, so they know exactly what they are agreeing to?

“Could you help me fix my life?” leaves both people guessing. A specific ask is a kindness to the person you are asking.

PART ONE

Asking for help.

The practical ask

“Could you help me with [specific task] by [time]? It would take about [estimate]. It is completely okay to say no.”

When you need hands, not conversation.

The listening ask

“I do not need advice right now. Could you listen for ten minutes and help me feel less alone with it?”

When the problem is not solvable today — and naming that up front prevents a well-meaning fix.

The company ask

“Can you sit with me while I make this call? I need company, not for you to speak for me.”

When the task is small but the dread is not.

The professional ask

“I am dealing with [situation]. What are my options, and what is the deadline I should be working to?”

With a doctor, adviser, caseworker, or lawyer. Ask for options and dates rather than reassurance.

The repeat ask

“You helped me with this last month. Would you be able to do it once more? If not, I completely understand.”

When you need to ask the same person twice and shame is doing the talking.

Give them room to decline. A no may reflect their time, money, skill, or capacity. It does not prove you were wrong to ask.

PART TWO

Holding a boundary.

The advice boundary

“I appreciate the concern — I am not looking for solutions right now.” / “I am gathering information before I decide.” / “I will ask if I want input.”

A boundary does not prove you are certain. It protects the space where a responsible decision gets made.

The privacy boundary

“I am not ready to share the full story. I will tell you what I can when I am ready.”

For people who are owed information but not access.

The pace boundary

“There are deadlines I have to meet and parts I cannot rush. I will update you when I have something clear to share.”

When someone else's discomfort is being presented to you as a schedule.

The silver-lining boundary

“I know you want to help. I am not looking for a silver lining today.”

When forced positivity arrives before you have finished understanding what happened.

The update boundary

“It is still difficult, and I am taking it one week at a time.”

A complete answer to “are you better now?” You can meet a practical deadline without pretending your heart has met one.

The exit

“I am going to change the subject.” / “I need to stop this conversation here.”

You are allowed to end a conversation you did not agree to have. No reason is required.

PART THREE

When it does not land.

Some people will hear a boundary and adjust. Some will negotiate. A few will treat the boundary itself as the problem. That last response is information about them, not evidence that you asked badly.

- **If they keep going:** repeat the same sentence rather than building a better argument. Explaining more invites debate; repetition ends it.
- **If they take offense:** you can acknowledge the feeling without withdrawing the limit. “I understand you are hurt. I still need to keep this private for now.”
- **If they need facts to coordinate:** share the facts required for coordination. That responsibility is real, and it is separate from an obligation to perform being okay.
- **If they escalate or make you feel unsafe:** that is a different situation than an awkward conversation. Reduce contact where you can and involve someone who can help.

NOTICE THIS

After certain conversations you may feel hurried, ashamed, or tempted to report progress you do not feel. That reaction is useful information about where a boundary is needed — not proof that you are being difficult.

Write your own

THE REQUEST I KEEP POSTPONING

Could you _____ by _____? I need _____. I do not need _____. It is okay if you cannot.

THE SENTENCE I WANT READY FOR NEXT TIME