

Yes to the Dress, No From... the Bridesmaid?

“Don’t be afraid to say no.”

Such was the advice of my aunt after I shared my frustrations about the high cost of being a bridesmaid. As a recent college graduate, I’ve been asked to be in several weddings, and the price ain’t pretty.

I was taken aback at her advice. Doesn’t [Pinterest dictate that the “Will you be my bridesmaid?”](#) question should always be followed with tears, giggling, and an emphatic “Yes!”? Is it even possible to say no with poise and still remain friends with the bride?

Since our conversation, I’ve pondered this question and come up with four points I plan to utilize if I ever decide to gracefully say no to being a bridesmaid.

1. Pick an Appropriate Time and Place

In the era of Instagram and Pinterest, more brides are using elaborate bridesmaid invitations. For example, one of my engaged friends opted for a Sunday afternoon invitation “ceremony.” It included handwritten cards and individually wrapped gifts – a candle, rosé, and a monogrammed wine glass.

A public and surprise “no” after the bride devotes time and treasure to having you in her wedding is hurtful. Thus, selecting the appropriate time and place to tell her that you won’t be in the wedding is imperative.

By contrast, another friend Facetimed me and asked me to be her bridesmaid. If I had chosen to say no, the conversation

would have been private and would also have given me time to explain. The odds of a friendship recovering after this conversation seem much more hopeful.

The ways these two girls asked me were quite different, and every bride has her own unique personality. As her friend, you know her best. If you suspect she might do a fancy bridesmaid ask, it's wise to give her your answer beforehand.

2. Decide How Honest You'll Be

The bride will ask why if you say no. Figure out what to say and which reasons to give before your conversation. If the reasons aren't personal, share them. Some of these include the following:

- **Financial** – It's not just [expensive to have your own wedding](#); it's expensive to be in one. I have spent upwards of \$700 to be in weddings and, according to Bustle, I was lucky: [the average cost of being in a wedding](#) is \$1,500. If you can't afford it, don't do it. A true friend will understand.
- **Geographical** – An additional financial expense is travel. If you have to spend \$1,000 flying to the wedding, then you have another legitimate excuse.
- **Prior Commitments** – Life gets busy. If you've already committed to something, don't go back on your word.

However, if your reasons for not being a bridesmaid are personal, keep them to yourself. Instead, thank the bride for the honor, but kindly say no.

3. Cushion the Blow

When you decline the bridesmaid invitation, cushion the blow and offer to help in another way. Bridal showers, bachelorette parties, and other events do not plan themselves. Offer to bring snacks to the bachelorette party or help with the rehearsal dinner. Any gesture will let the bride know you care about her friendship and her upcoming marriage.

4. Stay True to Your Word

These tips and your best intentions may not be received well. If you have made an informed and thoughtful decision, stay true to your word. Do not waffle back and forth with the bride.

At the end of the day, remember my aunt's advice: don't be afraid to say no. You and the bride will have plenty of reasons to celebrate her, even if you're not wearing a matching dress.

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