Negotiations Saying yes/ no/ maybe simplest responses card game and key words

Listen to your teacher and raise the Y or N cards depending on the function of what you hear. If a reply means “Maybe”, don’t raise either card. Without looking below for now, choose one of the key words below and try to think of or remember positive, negative and ambiguous phrases using that word. Some can be used in all three. You can start with the easiest ones. You can change the words a little you like, and some of the words can be combined in phrases.

- Absolutely
- Accept/ Acceptable
- Agree
- As
- Best
- Boss
- Can’t
- Compromise
- Consider
- Deal
- Expected
- Final
- Flexible
- Generous
- Happy
- Hear
- Help
- Hoping
- Later
- Let
- Like
- Mean

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● Move
● Option
● Point
● Position
● Possibility
● Promise
● Say/Said
● See
● Seem
● Should
● Sounds
● Sticking
● Suggesting
● Sure
● Think
● Willing
● Work
● Would
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Partial answers
Compare the answers below to your own and label each line Y, N or ? for “maybe”. Each line has a different function (i.e. there are not two “Yes” phrase lines with one key word).

- Absolutely!/ That would be absolutely wonderful./ If we absolutely must.
- Absolutely not./ That’s absolutely out of the question./ That is absolutely impossible./ That is absolutely my last word on this matter./ This is absolutely fundamental/ crucial/ vital.

- I’m sure you don’t (really/ honestly) expect us to accept…/ There’s no way I can accept…/ I’m (totally) unable to accept that.
- I reluctantly accept…
- I’m willing to accept… if…

- I think that will be acceptable./ That seems acceptable.
- To make that acceptable,…
- I (simply) can’t agree to…/ We would find this (somewhat/ rather/ very/ extremely) difficult to agree to.
- I will agree to that, providing…/ I might be able to agree to that, depending on…
- Okay, we agree to…

- As a (personal) favour,… / As it’s you,…
- As I explained to you earlier,…
- I’ll let you know as soon as I can.

- That’s the best I can do.
- I’ll do my best.
- That would probably be best.

- I’ll ask my boss, but I think I can imagine his reaction.
- This is (just/ only) a formality, but I’ll need to talk to my boss first.

- You can’t just demand…
- I can’t see any problem with that.
- I can’t say for sure, but…

- I can’t compromise (at all) on this point.
- Okay, I’m prepared to compromise on that.
- I can’t compromise much on this./ That’s acceptable, if you can compromise on…

- I can’t (even) consider that.
- I’ll consider it.
We may as well abandon the whole deal if/ unless.../If you want a deal,...
I think we have a deal./ It's a deal./ You have a deal.
That doesn't sound like a (very/ sufficiently) good deal.
I really expected something (a bit/ quite a lot) better./ That's (almost) the (exact) opposite of what I expected.
To be honest, that is better than we expected.

Before I make a final decision,...
That's (absolutely) my final/ last offer.

I can be flexible on (almost) everything apart from that./ I think we've already been (fairly/ quite/ very) flexible on this.
Thanks for being so flexible.

Thank you. That's very generous.
I think we are already being (quite/ very) generous.

I'm (fairly/ really quite/ very/ really) happy with that./ I'm not very happy about this, but...
I'm not (very) happy with...

I'm (very) glad to hear that.
That was not what I wanted to hear.

We (really/ very much) appreciate your help with this.
It might help if you could...

That wasn't (quite/ really/ at all) what I was hoping for./ I was hoping for something (a bit/ considerably/ quite a lot/ a lot/ much/ far) better.
I was hoping you might say that.

Can we discuss that at a later meeting?/ I'll confirm that later.
I'll probably regret this later, but...

I'll let you know by Friday.
Let me know if you change your mind.

I'd like to be able to say yes, but...
I'd like to be more decisive but...
If you like.

Our (present/ current) circumstances mean that...
Could you clarify what you mean by...?/ Does that mean...?
I can move on that.
I’m not going to (be able to) move (at all) on this. I can’t move on this. While we are glad to see that you have moved (somewhat) from your original position,…

That is an option.
That is not an option.

There doesn’t seem to be much point in discussing this further. That point is not negotiable. I hope you can see our point of view. That’s a good point, but…
There is no point in discussing this (further/ anymore/ at the moment) unless…
You have a point. Taking that into account,…

I can understand your position, but… While I (completely/ more or less) understand your position,… I’m (really) not in the position to (be able to)…
Just to make sure that I understand your position,…

If there is (really) no other possibility (,…)
That is a possibility.

I can’t promise (anything/ much), but…
What about your previous promise to…?
Okay, I can promise you that will happen.

That is (basically) what we were going to say.
I don’t think there’s anything more to say.

Taking what you said into account,…
But you said…

I’d need to see (all of) that written down. I’ll see what I can do.
I can’t see any way round this. That is not how we see it.

We seem to have come to (some kind of) a stalemate. You don’t seem to be meeting us halfway. That seems (a bit/ much/ far) too… That doesn’t seem to be… enough.
We seem to be in agreement.

Where should I sign? That should be fine.
You should have…

That sounds (fairly/ very) reasonable.
That sounds feasible.
That sounds (rather) unappealing.

I’m sticking to my (original) position.
The sticking point for us is…
That doesn’t have to be a sticking point.

Actually, that is (basically) what we were suggesting.
Are you (honestly/ seriously) proposing/ suggesting…?/ I’m surprised that you would (even) suggest that.

I’m not sure that we can do that./ Are you sure that’s your final offer?
Just to make sure that I understand your offer,…

I’ll think about it./ If you can give some time to think about it,…
I don’t think we would benefit (much/ at all/ enough) from that.
I think we’ve found some common ground.

I’m not willing to accept…/ I’m not willing to haggle./ That is (really) as far as I am willing to go.
I’m willing to consider that.

That (just/ simply) won’t work./ I’m not sure that would work (for us).
That would work for us.
We still need to work out the details, but…

I think… would be fairer. / That would (totally) mess up our plans to…/ I don’t think that would go down (very) well at head office.
We would accept that if you were able to…/ You would need to…
That would be perfect/ wonderful/ great.

Circle expressions meaning “Yes” which are used when someone isn’t really happy.

Test each other on that language in some or all of these ways:
- Listen to your partner and raise the right card
- Listen to phrases with key words missing and guess the missing words
- Do the same, but also identifying the functions of the phrases
- Try to make phrases with the key words that your partner tells you, with them helping you if you get stuck
- Try to make as many phrases as you can with one function, with your partner giving you key words and other help if you get stuck

Play this freer practice game:
- Flip a coin without your partner seeing what you got and try to get a positive response with your responses if you got a head and a negative response if you got a tail.

What phrases could you use for giving reasons for saying no? What kinds of excuses are good?

What phrases can you use for making proposals/ suggesting?

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