

Words of Wisdom: The Use of “Yes” and “No”

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By Shari Broussard, Vice-President

Rule 1: For the plural of *yes*, use *yes's*; the plural of *no*, use *no's*.

Example: You need to use *yes's* and *no's* rather than nodding your head.

Rule 2: When the word *yes* or *no* is used generically and refers to a general positive or negative response, do not put quotes around it.

Example: This requires a *yes-or-no* answer.

You don't have to explain it to me. Just give me a *yes* or *no*.

Rule 3: When the word *yes* or *no* is used in a specific sense as a possible answer, use quotes around it and cap it.

Example: You need to say “*Yes*” or “*No*” or “*I don't know*” or “*I'm not sure.*”

You have to respond with “*Yes,*” not “*Uh-huh.*”

Rule 4: When the word *yes* or *no* is said multiple times, use commas or periods to separate the words.

Example: Q Were you aware of the marriage?

A Yes. Yes. Yes.

A Yes, yes, yes.

Rule 5: When the words after the *yes* or *no* simply reflect or “echo” the words of the question, use a comma after the *yes* or *no*.

Example: Q Did you see him later that night?

A Yes, I did.

A No, I didn't.

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Rule 6: When the words after the *yes* or *no* do not repeat or “echo” the words of the question but provide additional information, use a period after the *yes* or *no*.

Example: Q Did your deposition start at 10:00 a.m.?
A Yes. I was ready to start at 9:15 a.m.
A No. The attorney was running late.

Rule 7: When the words after the *yes* or *no* begin with coordinate conjunctions like *but* or subordinate conjunctions like *because* or *though*, use a period after the *yes* or *no*.

Example: Q Did you go to the NCRA convention in Chicago?
A Yes. And I met a lot of people.
A Yes. Because we had a booth in the Exhibition Hall.
A No. But I heard everyone had a great time.

Rule 8: If the answer continues after the *yes* or *no* and its echoed answer – for example, after “Yes, I did” or “No, he hasn’t” – put a period after the echoed answer before the addition of another sentence.

Example: Q Have you attended all the local seminars for real-time?
A Yes, I have. I have not missed one.

Rule 9: When the word *yes* or *no* is at the end of the sentence, it takes a comma in front of it.

Example: The reporter read back very well, yes.
The witness did not have the proper spelling of his name, no.

Rule 10: When the word *yes* or *no* is in the middle of the sentence and the sentence is complete and makes sense without it, surround the word with commas.

Example: I wasn’t aware of it at the time but, yes, was shocked to find it out later.
He did not e-mail me, no, when he was away.