



FIRST-TIME BOSS BONUS GUIDE

10 Go-To Phrases Every First-Time Boss Should Know

What to say when leadership gets uncomfortable.

Clear words. Calm delivery. Confident leadership.

Created by Rose • First-Time Boss

HEY, BOSS LADY!

Sometimes the hardest part of leading isn't knowing what needs to happen - it's knowing what to say in the moment.

This quick-reference guide gives you 10 practical phrases for common leadership situations. Use them as a starting point, adapt them to your voice, and make them your own.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Save it somewhere easy to reach. Before a difficult conversation, scan the situation that fits, borrow the structure, and then speak in a way that still sounds like you.

01

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER

"I don't have the answer right now, but let me look into it and get back to you."

USE THIS WHEN: Someone asks you something you genuinely don't know.

BOSS REMINDER: You don't need to know everything to lead well. Be honest, find the answer, and follow through.

02

WHEN YOU NEED TIME TO MAKE A DECISION

"I'd like some time to think this through before making a decision. I'll get back to you by [time/day]."

USE THIS WHEN: You feel pressured to decide immediately but need time to consider the information.

BOSS REMINDER: You can be decisive without being impulsive.

03

WHEN YOU NEED TO GIVE CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

“I noticed [specific behaviour/situation]. Going forward, I need [clear expectation]. What support do you need from me to make that happen?”

USE THIS WHEN: A team member's performance or behaviour needs to be addressed.

BOSS REMINDER: Focus on the behaviour and the expectation - not on attacking the person.

04

WHEN YOU NEED TO SAY NO

“I understand the request, but I'm not able to approve that at this time. Here's what we can do instead...”

USE THIS WHEN: You need to decline a request without over-explaining or apologizing repeatedly.

BOSS REMINDER: Saying no respectfully is part of leadership.

05

WHEN YOU NEED TO SET A BOUNDARY

“I’m happy to discuss this with you. Let’s schedule a time when I can give the conversation the attention it deserves.”

USE THIS WHEN: Someone approaches you at a difficult time or expects immediate access to you.

BOSS REMINDER: Being supportive doesn’t mean being available every second.

06

WHEN SOMEONE CHALLENGES YOUR DECISION

“I appreciate you sharing your perspective. I’ve considered the information available, and this is the direction we’re moving forward with.”

USE THIS WHEN: You’ve listened to feedback, made your decision, and need to stand behind it.

BOSS REMINDER: Listening to another perspective doesn’t mean you must change every decision.

07

WHEN YOU NEED TO DELEGATE

“I’d like you to take the lead on [task]. Here’s the outcome we need, the timeline, and what support is available. Let’s check in on [day/time].”

USE THIS WHEN: You need to hand over responsibility without micromanaging.

BOSS REMINDER: Clear expectations make delegation easier for both you and your team.

08

WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE

“I made the wrong call here, and I take responsibility for it. Here’s what I’ve learned and what I’m going to do differently moving forward.”

USE THIS WHEN: You make a leadership mistake and need to own it.

BOSS REMINDER: Confidence isn’t pretending you never get it wrong. Own it, correct it, and learn from it.

09

WHEN A CONVERSATION BECOMES TENSE

“I want us to work through this productively. Let’s focus on the issue and what we need to do to move forward.”

USE THIS WHEN: Emotions are rising or the conversation is becoming unproductive.

BOSS REMINDER: Stay grounded and bring the conversation back to the issue.

10

WHEN YOU NEED CLARIFICATION

“Before I respond, I want to make sure I understand. Can you walk me through what happened from your perspective?”

USE THIS WHEN: You’re hearing about a problem or conflict and don’t yet have the full picture.

BOSS REMINDER: Good leaders ask questions before jumping to conclusions.

A NOTE FROM ROSE



~ Rose

Hey, Boss Lady! I'm Rose.

I stepped into my first senior management role at 23 and quickly learned that having the title didn't automatically make the fear, second-guessing, or difficult conversations disappear.

Through hands-on leadership experience, mistakes, learning, and growth, I learned to trust my judgment and find my own leadership voice. First-Time Boss was created to help other women do the same - with practical tools they can actually use.

YOUR BOSS LADY REMINDER

You don't need the perfect words every time you speak. You don't need every answer. And you don't need to sound like somebody else to be taken seriously.

Your leadership voice gets stronger the more you use it.

Save these phrases. Make them your own. And remember: YOU CAN LEAD.

