

# Sav's Top 5 Client Boundaries and how to set them

Hi, I'm Sav



And I have been where you are! I had very poor boundaries with my clients in the beginning, like DM me at 10:30pm at night on instagram bad... and I can't count how many times I answered those DM's too.

Now my clients respect that I have a life outside of business... haha what a joke that it is right! But they don't need to know I work after hours, I am working for me then, not them. So how do we set those boundaries related to our communication and set the clients expectations straight at the beginning, but also how do we stick to that and not cave.

# My Client Boundaries

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Does this sound like you right now? Replying to late night text messages, clients that are holding up the process, or wanting to meet on the weekends.. ehhh right. Who has time for that nonsense!

Don't worry, I have been there sista! And I don't want to see you make the same mistakes I did. I was always under the impression that clients wanted that freedom, they needed me to be fllexible for them or they would go elsewhere. Like customers are always right! RIGHT? Nope. I found that once I was clear with client about my expectations they thrived off the boundary I was setting. The love to know what to expect, when to expect it and what their role is in it all.

So use this document as a guide to setting expectations, clear boundaries and your intent to your clients so they will leave you the bloody hell alone this weekend so you can go live your god damn life in peace.

## No.1

### No texting or DM'ing

Only exception to this rule would be when a quick logistically message needs to be relayed such as running late to a meeting or asking where the meeting location is last minute. The times where an email might not get read fast enough.

“ We would appreciate if you would keep all communication to Email and Phone Calls only. Please refrain from using other communication channels like instagram, text or facebook to relay important information to us. We get a high volume of communication through those channels and your message is at a high risk of being missed there.

We appreciate your understanding on this, but do understand that on occasion if you need to get a hold of us quickly and we aren't answering the phone to leave a text and we will call you as soon as possible.

## No.2

### No phone calls after hours

Calls are welcome during businesses hours only. I believe there is no exception to this rule. If my phone rings after hours I am going to assume it is a family member, if I answer and it's a client I would politely ask if I can get back to them during office hours.

“ We would appreciate if you would keep all phone call communication to between the hours of 9am to 5 pm (or whatever your chosen hours are). We appreciate your understanding on this and if a call is accidentally answered after hours we will advise you to call back, or we will book a time to call you the following day.

## No.3

### Set meeting days and times

I only meet with clients from 10am - 3pm Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I feel I do my best face to face work on those days and I ensure clients book within those time slots.

“ We take client meetings from this day/time to this day/time, we do our best work on those days and your project is our top priority. If you cannot meet during those set day/time we will bill you out at 1.5 x our normal hourly rate to meet out of our ordinary hours.

This is the little boundary they need, being charged extra, to push them gently into making our meeting hours work with them.

## No.4

### Client feedback deadlines

I know how frustrating waiting weeks for client feedback can be, whether that be on a set of plans, selections or quote approvals. It is such a pain when the clients take forever getting back to you and stall the whole project.

“ We expect client feedback in 5-7 days (whatever your chosen time frame is) as we like to ensure your project progresses as promised. If you need more than the allotted time please let us know, however do be aware that this may affect our ability to get your project finished by our agreed due date.

## No.5

### Email and phone response times

I personally have a 72 hour policy as I travel a lot for work and it is sometimes hard to return calls on those days, however my clients have come to expect that I will return their call or email and my soonest available time.

“ You can typically expect to receive return communication by phone or email within 24/72 hours (which ever you prefer) with the exception of holidays and weekends. We will always endeavor to get back to you as soon as we can. We alternatively expect the same from you.

# How to Implement your boundaries

I wont lie to you, I am a shocker to sticking with boundaries. It has taken me probably 2 years to set the boundaries, a year of letting clients break them, a good month where I absolutely resented my clients for not respecting my boundaries.. yes the ones I was only enforcing 20% of the times... and a near mental breakdown to shock me into getting my shit together.

I did these three things to ensure I never ended up in the foetal position rocking myself in a puddle of my own tears after yet another client called me in a rage on the weekend asking where her plumber was - yes the plumber that was scheduled for Tuesday, not Sunday, at 7am. I defined my boundaries (like you have in the first part of this booklet), I communicated them to my clients, and I put my foot down when they disrespected them.

**ONE** | I spent time defining my boundaries and listing them out

**TWO** | I learnt how to effectively communicate my boundaries

**THREE** | I put my god damn foot down, and taught my clients to respect my boundaries

# STEP 1 : Define your unique client boundaries

You have already read what mine are but yours might be a little different and unique to the way you work. Write your boundary in the green and the wording you will use to communicate that with your client in the lines.

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# How I communicate boundaries to my clients

Where your boundaries need to be communicated with the client to ensure your clients will retain the boundary and are more likely to respect it.

To affectively communicate those boundaries to clients they have to be seeing that information on average 3 times before it sinks in for them. So all your boundaries should be seen in the following areas.

## contract

All that important info should be seen in your contract first of all. But as we know not many people read the fine print so for that reason you should also have it in....

## welcome

A Welcome Packet - some sort of welcome document where you run them through your process, set their expectations, and relay any important information to them.

## verbally

I only use this method when a boundary wasn't being respected or they may not have realised that boundary existed. I always use gently wording and ensure I am being respectful in my approach, but I let them know about the boundary and what I expect of them next time. Refer back the way I wrote out the boundaries above to use when you need to relay them to a client.

However, for specific boundaries like opening hours, your meeting days and typical response times for email and calls you need to have this information in as many places as possible. Here is a checklist to tick off to make sure that info is everywhere.

- GOOGLE BUSINESS
- EMAIL SIGNATURE
- YELLOW PAGES
- INSTAGRAM
- CONTRACT
- EMAIL AWAY MESSAGE
- FACEBOOK
- WELCOME PACKET
- WEBSITE
- MESSAGE BANK
- ENQUIRY FORM
- LINK TREE

# how do I get my clients to respect the boundaries

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This takes practice, persistence, and never giving in.

Always think about your overall health and wellbeing, what will you have to sacrifice to give in to that client? Time? Money? A Saturday night? is it worth it? NO FREAKING WAY!

We are our own worst enemies when it comes to enforcing these boundaries. When a client texts and you respond... you have taught them that behaviour is okay and you have rewarded them with a reply. Yes I am about to compare your client to a dog.. but I love dogs so it's meant with the upmost respect but basically training a client is like a training dog, if you reward bad behaviour they will continue to behave that way.

Some people might say when you receive a text and you have explicitly asked clients not to text, to just not reply. But I don't love that approach. I think non direct communication like this is a rude way of defining a boundary with a client, and half the time they forget they even texted you in the first place.

I instead, politely define the boundary again and let them know what I expect instead. I will usually back it up with a reason as to why I do this, so they have a better understanding. Let's take the texting one for instance. I would reply with

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"Thank you for your text, but I will just take a second to remind you that I don't accept text messages as a form of contact with my clients. I do this as important information pertaining to your project is often lost in text messages, your project is so important to me and I would prefer you to send this in an email so I can take my time to read it in office hours. Thank you for understanding".

So that is a message I can confidently use now, but a couple of years ago I would have literally shitted bricks sending this to a client. So you could try sending one that sounds more automated so it relives you of the direct connection to the words being send like this for example.

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"Thank you for sending Savannah Denny Interiors your text message. Unfortunately we do not accept text messages as a form of contact with our clients as they are often missed. We would prefer to receive your message via email as it is a secure platform and the likelihood for misplacing the important information pertaining to you project is a lot lower. Please proceed to forward this message to our email and we will get back to you in 24 hours or in the next business day. We appreciate your understanding from the team at Savannah Denny Interiors"

Enforcing your boundaries is super uncomfortable at first, but the more you do it the less awkward it feels. Maintaining these boundaries will give you and the client the necessary structure to both thrive during this time working together.

You need to look after you to be able to effectively look after your client and their project.

**BONUS!**

# family and friends

## boundaries for working with them

You're probably practicing and honing your skill on friends and family right now, right? And that's great! What a low risk way to trial all the services you are going to offer in your business.

But I will let you in on a secret. One day, hopefully soon, you will be really busy with paid client work and they will still expect the discounts, having you on speed dial, and the ever frustrating, 'can I have some quick FREE advice.. I won't take up too much of your time' yeah... NO! You are too busy for this bull shit now.

I have worked on a lot of my friends projects and it's stressful and often not all that profitable. So what do I do now instead of the discounts, and the endless hours of chatting, and changes... eh. I treat them like they are any other client, they get the exact same deliverables, on the same timelines with the same amount of effort from me as any other client. How did I do this? By saying the following things to them:

### **1 | Make it seem like you are moving heaven and earth to slip them in, they will appreciate you scheduling one of your current clients to fit them in**

I am super busy right now and my schedule is packed, but you know what Mrs. Smith actually just asked whether she could wait another couple months to start her project so I might have an opening for you. Let me get back to you on that!

### **2 | Make their project seem super high on your priorities and let them know you want them to have the same amazing experience your other clients receive**

So I like to treat you exactly like my other clients as they get such a great level of service from me so moving forward I will put you through the same process to ensure my service doesn't drop because your my friend.

### **3 | Charge them full price, a drop in profit will make you prioritise their work lower than the paid clients, but offer them some sort of incentive to show you care**

So I can't offer you a discount unfortunately, but I could wave the initial consultation fee, or we could offer you our trade discounts which other clients don't get access to! (that way you aren't losing much money)