

To prepare flowers for a narrow necked bottle, clean the bottle, remove leaves that would sit in water, and trim the stems before placing them inside. Choose a few stems that fit through the opening without being forced, then add enough water to cover their cut ends.

Start with a clean bottle

Wash the bottle with warm, soapy water and rinse it well. A bottle brush can reach the bottom where a sponge cannot. If the opening is too small for a brush, swirl soapy water inside and rinse until no soap remains.

Set the bottle on a stable surface and check that it can support the flowers without tipping. A tall, heavy stem can pull a light bottle off balance, especially on a narrow windowsill or a crowded kitchen table.

Choose stems that fit

Look at both the opening and the space inside the bottle. A few slender stems are often easier to arrange than one large bunch. Flowers with branching stems may need extra room near the neck, even if their cut ends fit through it.

Try a simple mix of shapes and heights. A single flower can stand on its own, while a few smaller blooms or leafy stems can soften the outline. Leave enough space to lift each stem out again without dragging petals through the opening.

- Choose firm stems that can support their flower heads.
- Use fewer stems if the neck holds them tightly together.
- Avoid pushing a thick or woody stem into the bottle.

- Keep loose petals and leaves out of the water.

Trim and place the flowers

Hold a stem beside the bottle to judge its height. The flower head should clear the opening, with enough stem below it to reach the water. Trim a little at a time using clean, sharp scissors or garden snips. Cut the end at an angle.

Remove leaves that would be below the waterline. Leaves left in water can decay and make the bottle harder to clean. If a leaf catches at the neck, remove it rather than pulling the stem through by force.

Add water, then place the largest flower first. Turn the bottle as you add the remaining stems, looking at the arrangement from the side it will usually be seen. On a dining table, you may want it to look balanced from every seat.

Keep the water fresh

Check the water level each day. A small bottle can hold less water than it appears to, and stems need their cut ends submerged. Keep the arrangement away from direct sun and other sources of heat.

Replace cloudy water, rinse the bottle, and trim the stems again before putting them back. Remove fading flowers as they appear so the remaining stems have room.

Questions about bottle arrangements

How many flowers should I use?

Start with one to three stems. Add another only if it slides in and out easily.

Can I use a bottle with a very small opening?

Yes. Choose a single slender stem and check that the bottle stays upright.

Should the water reach the neck?

No. The cut ends need to be submerged, but the bottle does not need to be full.

How do I remove a stuck stem?

Gently turn and ease it out. If leaves are caught at the opening, loosen them first.

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