

To prepare freesia stems for a fragrant bouquet, trim the ends, remove any leaves that would sit below the water, and place the stems in a clean vase with fresh water. Choose stems with some flowers open and others still in bud, then keep the bouquet cool and change the water regularly.

Choose and handle the stems

Look for firm, green stems and fresh flowers without brown or bruised petals. A stem with one or two open flowers and several plump buds gives you scent now and more flowers to enjoy as the buds open. Freesia scent can vary, so smell the open flowers before choosing if fragrance is important to you.

Handle the stems gently. Freesia flowers grow along one side of a slender stem, and the individual blooms can be knocked off if you grip them tightly. Carry the bunch by the lower stems rather than by the flowers. If the stems have been wrapped, remove the wrapping before putting them in water.

Clean and cut

Wash the vase with soap and water, then rinse it well. Fill it with fresh water and add flower food if you have it, following the instructions on the packet. A clean vase and clean water help limit the buildup of bacteria around the cut stems.

Use clean, sharp scissors or flower snips to cut a little off the bottom of each stem. An angled cut gives you a clear surface at the base. Trim the stems to suit the vase, leaving enough length for the curved flower heads to sit above the rim.

Pull or cut away any leaves that would be under water. Leave the leaves above the waterline in place if they look fresh and suit the arrangement. Put each stem in the vase soon after cutting it.

Arrange for shape and scent

Start with a few stems near the centre of the vase, then add the rest around them. Turn the stems so the flowers face outward in different directions. Their natural curves give the bouquet shape without much fuss.

Do not pack the vase so tightly that the stems are crushed together. Give the flower heads room to open, and check that the lower ends of all the stems reach the water. A vase with a relatively narrow opening can support a small bunch without forcing the stems into place.

If you add other flowers or foliage, keep their stems out of the way of the freesia blooms. Choose companions that look fresh and do not crowd the vase. Freesia can also make a simple bouquet on its own.

Keep the bouquet fresh

Place the vase somewhere cool, away from direct sun, heaters and ripening fruit. Top up the water as needed. Every couple of days, empty the vase, wash it and refill it with fresh water. Recut the stem ends before returning them to the vase.

Remove faded flowers as they appear, taking care not to damage nearby buds. Check the water level at the same time, especially if the vase is small.

These few steps give the stems a clean start and leave the flowers room to open. Keep the bouquet where you can enjoy its scent without exposing it to heat.

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