



What is a Negative Sentence?

A negative sentence tells us that something is not true, doesn't happen, or doesn't exist. In English, we usually make negative sentences with 'not'.

- I **am not** tired.
- She **will not** go out tonight.
- The children **have not** arrived yet.

We also make sentences with a negative meaning using words like **no, none, nothing, nobody, nowhere, never, rarely, not once, not only... but also, under no circumstances, not any more, and not any longer.**

- We bought **none** of the tickets.
- **Nothing** happened at the meeting.
- **Never** have I seen such a beautiful view.



How to Form a Negative Sentence

We usually make a negative sentence by adding 'not' after the auxiliary verb. With the present simple and past simple, we add the auxiliary verbs 'do / does / did'.

Present simple with 'be'

Negative

I am not German.

You are not on the phone.

He is not late.

She is not thirsty.

It is not warm.

We are not at home.

They are not children.

Negative short forms

I'm not German.

You're not / you aren't on the phone.

He's not / he isn't late.

She's not / she isn't thirsty.

It's not / it isn't warm.

We're not / we aren't at home.

They're not / they aren't children.

Present simple with other verbs

Negative

I do not play tennis.

You do not live in London.

He does not like chocolate.

She does not hate mushrooms.

It does not rain often.

We do not travel a lot.

They do not want a drink.

Negative short form

I'm not tennis.

You don't live in London.

He doesn't like chocolate.

She doesn't hate mushrooms.

It doesn't rain often.

We don't travel a lot.

They don't want a drink.



Present continuous

Negative

I am not sleeping.

You are not playing.

He is not reading.

She is not working.

It is not raining.

We are not cooking.

They are not listening.

Negative short form

I'm not sleeping.

You're not / you aren't playing.

He's not / he isn't reading.

She's not / she isn't working.

It's not / it isn't raining.

We're not / we aren't cooking.

They're not / they aren't listening.

Past simple with 'be'

Negative

I was not sleepy.

You were not on the bus.

He was not at school.

She was not beautiful.

It was not cold.

We were not at work.

They were not tired.

Negative short form

I wasn't sleepy.

You weren't on the bus.

He wasn't at school.

She wasn't beautiful.

It wasn't cold.

We weren't at work.

They weren't tired.



Past simple with other verbs

Negative

I did not walk home.

You did not play the piano.

He did not cook dinner.

She did not listen to music.

It did not rain much.

We did not laugh all night.

They did not miss the train.

Negative short form

I didn't walk home.

You didn't play the piano.

He didn't cook dinner.

She didn't listen to music.

It didn't rain much.

We didn't laugh all night.

They didn't miss the train.

Past continuous

Negative

I was not sleeping.

You were not working.

He was not coming.

She was not reading.

It was not raining.

We were not shopping.

They were not watching a film.

Negative short form

I wasn't sleeping.

You weren't working.

He wasn't coming.

She wasn't reading.

It wasn't raining.

We weren't shopping.

They weren't watching a film.



Present perfect

Negative

I have not played tennis.

You have not worked hard.

He has not reviewed the lesson.

She has not walked home.

It has not rained.

We have not listened to a podcast.

They have not cleaned the kitchen.

Negative short form

I haven't / I've not played tennis.

You haven't / you've not worked hard.

He hasn't / he's not reviewed the lesson.

She hasn't / she's not walked home.

It hasn't / it's not rained.

We haven't / we've not listened to a podcast.

They haven't / they've not cleaned the kitchen.

Present perfect continuous

Negative

I have not been playing tennis.

You have not been working hard.

He has not been reviewing the lesson.

She has not been walking home.

It has not been raining.

We have not been listening to a podcast.

They have not been cleaning the kitchen.

Negative short form

I haven't / I've not been playing tennis.

You haven't / you've not been working hard.

He hasn't / he's not been reviewing the lesson.

She hasn't / she's not been walking home.

It hasn't / it's not been raining.

We haven't / we've not been listening to a podcast.

They haven't / they've not been cleaning the kitchen.



Past perfect

Negative

I had not played tennis.

You had not worked hard.

He had not reviewed the lesson.

She had not walked home.

It had not rained.

We had not listened to a podcast.

They had not cleaned the kitchen.

Negative short form

I hadn't / I'd not played tennis.

You hadn't / you'd not worked hard.

He hadn't / he'd not reviewed the lesson.

She hadn't / she'd not walked home.

It hadn't / it'd not rained.

We hadn't / we'd not listened to a podcast.

They hadn't / they'd not cleaned the kitchen.

Past perfect continuous

Negative

I had not been eating.

You had not been cooking dinner.

She had not been sleeping.

He had not been gardening.

It had not been raining.

We had not been trying.

They had not been talking.

Negative short form

I hadn't / I'd not been eating.

You hadn't / you'd not been cooking dinner.

She hadn't / she'd not been sleeping.

He hadn't / he'd not been gardening.

It hadn't / it'd not been raining.

We hadn't / we'd not been trying.

They hadn't / they'd not been talking.



Future simple

Negative

I will not go.

You will not be late.

It will not snow tomorrow.

She will not get the job.

He will not pass the exam.

We will not come.

They will not stop.

Negative short form

I won't go.

You won't be late.

It won't snow tomorrow.

She won't get the job.

He won't pass the exam.

We won't come.

They won't stop.

Future continuous

Negative

I will not be playing tennis.

You will not be working hard.

He will not be reviewing the lesson.

She will not be walking home.

It will not be raining.

We will not be listening to a podcast.

They will not be cleaning the kitchen.

Negative short form

I won't be playing tennis.

You won't be working hard.

He won't be reviewing the lesson.

She won't be walking home.

It won't be raining.

We won't be listening to a podcast.

They won't be cleaning the kitchen.



Future perfect

Negative

I will not have left by 2pm.

You will not have learnt the words before the test.

She will not have had lunch by then.

He will not have sent all the emails by this evening.

It will not have downloaded by tomorrow.

We will not have seen Julie by then.

They will not have eaten their sandwiches.

Negative short form

I won't have left by 2pm.

You won't have learnt the words before the test.

She won't have had lunch by then.

He won't have sent all the emails by this evening.

It won't have downloaded by tomorrow.

We won't have seen Julie by then.

They won't have eaten their sandwiches.

Future perfect continuous

Negative

I will not have been working here for ten years.

You will not have been studying all morning.

She will not have been waiting long.

He will not have been driving for two hours.

It will not have been raining for very long.

We will not have been living in London for a year.

They will not have been training for the competition.

Negative short form

I won't have been working here for ten years.

You won't have been studying all morning.

She won't have been waiting long.

He won't have been driving for two hours.

It won't have been raining for very long.

We won't have been living in London for a year.

They won't have been training for the competition.



Contractions in Negative Sentences

We make the negative short forms like this:

Full form	Short form (also called contractions)
do not	don't
does not	doesn't
did not	didn't
am not	'm not
is not	isn't / 's not
are not	aren't / 're not
have not	haven't / 've not
has not	hasn't / 's not
had not	hadn't / 'd not
will not	won't / 'll not

We almost always use these contractions when we're speaking or writing. We only use the full forms in very formal situations. Where there are two possible short forms, you can choose either. 'She's not going' is exactly the same as 'she isn't going'.



Negative Sentences Using Different Auxiliary Verbs

Here's a summary of how we make negative sentences with different auxiliary verbs.

No auxiliary verb

We add 'not' directly after the main verb in the present simple of 'be' and the past simple of 'be'.

I'm here.	I'm not here.
They're from Italy.	They're not from Italy.
She was at the party.	She wasn't at the party.
You were late.	You weren't late.

Do / does / did

We need to add do / does / did and then add 'not' in the present simple with other verbs and the past simple with other verbs.

I wake up at 6am.	I don't wake up at 6am.
He plays with his friends.	He doesn't play with his friends.
She went swimming today.	She didn't go swimming today.

Am / is / are

We put 'not' after the verb 'be' and before the verb-ing in continuous tenses.

I'm swimming.	I'm not swimming.
She's watching TV.	She's not watching TV.
They're swimming.	They're not swimming today.
He was doing homework.	He wasn't doing homework.
We were having fun.	We weren't having fun.



Have / has / had

We put 'not' after the auxiliary 'have', before the past participle.

I've been to school.

I haven't been to school.

He's finished.

He hasn't finished.

We'd spoken to him.

We hadn't spoken to him.



How to Make Negative Questions

With normal yes / no questions, we put the auxiliary verb at the start.

- Do you want coffee?
- Have you done your homework?

When we ask negative questions, we need to include 'not' (or, more usually, 'n't'). We can use them to show that we are surprised by something, and we want to check that it's true.

- **Don't** you want coffee? (= I'm surprised that you don't want coffee, so I'm checking that you really don't want any.)
- **Haven't** you done your homework? (= I'm surprised that you maybe haven't done it.)

Negative questions are easy to make. You just add 'n't' after the auxiliary verb at the beginning of the question. We can make them in any tense.

Present simple with 'be'

Isn't she from Brazil?

Present simple with other verbs

Don't they live in Canada?

Present continuous

Isn't he coming with us?

Past simple with 'be'

Didn't you go out last night?

Past simple with other verbs

Didn't you go out last night?

Past continuous

Wasn't she working when you saw her?

Present perfect

Haven't you done your homework?

Present perfect continuous

Hasn't she been sleeping?

Past perfect

Hadn't he gone to the doctor?

Past perfect continuous

Hadn't you been studying?

Future simple with 'will'

Won't you help me?

Future simple with 'going to'

Aren't you going to come with us?

Future continuous

Won't they be sleeping at 3am?

Future perfect

Won't you have finished everything by then?

Future perfect continuous

Won't she have been travelling for ages?



Negatives with Modal Verbs

We make negative modal verbs by adding 'not' directly after the modal. For short forms, we use 'n't'. 'May' and 'might' don't have short forms.

- Positive: You should try.
- Negative: You should not try. / You shouldn't try.

Full form

Short form

Should + not + infinitive

He should not be late for class.

Shouldn't + infinitive

You shouldn't eat too much sugar.

Will + not + infinitive

I will not tell anyone your secret.

Won't + infinitive

She won't come to the party.

Cannot (usually one word) + infinitive

They cannot open the door.

Can't + infinitive

I can't swim.

Could + not + infinitive

He could not finish the test on time.

Couldn't + infinitive

We couldn't find the bus stop.

Might + not + infinitive

She might not call tonight.

-

May + not + infinitive

Students may not use phones in class.

-

Must + not + infinitive

Visitors must not park here.

Mustn't + infinitive

You mustn't touch the wires.



Common Negative Words and Phrases

We can also make the meaning of sentence negative by using negative words and phrases instead of 'not'. Here are some words we use in this way.

'No' and 'none'

Words like 'no', 'none', and 'not...any' help us show that nothing exists, or that we don't have a single one of something.

'No'

'No' is a determiner and it goes before a noun to say we don't have something. It is stronger than 'not any'. We use it in grammatically positive sentences.

- There is **no** chocolate left. (= There isn't any chocolate left.)
- She has **no** friends in this city. (= She doesn't have any friends.)

'None'

We can't use 'no' alone - it always comes before a noun. If there isn't a noun, we must use 'none'. 'None' is a pronoun, and it replaces the subject or the object of the verb. When we use 'none', it makes the meaning quite strong.

- There is **none** left.
- Friends? She has **none**.

'Not...any'

'No' and 'none' are the equivalent of using 'any' with negative verbs that include 'not'.

- He **doesn't** read **any** books.
- She **doesn't** have **any** time today.

Let's compare how they work:

- Negative sentence: **I didn't buy any.**
- Grammatically positive sentence, but with a negative meaning: **I bought none.**



- Negative sentence: **She doesn't like any vegetables.**
- Grammatically positive sentence, but with a negative meaning: **She likes no vegetables.**

We can't use 'not' and 'no' or 'none' together in standard English. This is called a 'double negative' and isn't correct.

- NOT: I didn't buy none.
- NOT: She doesn't like no vegetables.

Nothing, nobody, nowhere, no one

We use the pronouns 'nothing', 'nobody', 'nowhere' and 'no one' with positive verbs, because they already have a negative meaning.

- She wants **nothing** to eat.
- I saw **nobody** there.
- They went **nowhere** last weekend.

These are the equivalent of using 'anything', 'anybody', 'anyone' and 'anywhere' in negative sentences with 'not'.

- She **doesn't** want **anything** to eat.
- I **don't** know **anybody** who's coming.
- She **doesn't** want to go **anywhere**.

Again, we can't use 'not' and 'nothing' or 'nowhere' or 'nobody' together in standard English. This is called a 'double negative' and isn't correct.

- NOT: I didn't go nowhere.
- NOT: She doesn't like nothing.



No more and no longer

‘No more’ and ‘no longer’ are stronger alternatives to ‘not ... any more / any longer’. These adverbs show that something has stopped or isn’t true now and tend to be used with the present tense. ‘No longer’ is quite formal.

- I **no longer** go there.
- There is **no more** milk in the fridge.

‘No more’ and ‘no longer’ are a stronger equivalent to using ‘not ... any more’ and ‘not ... any longer’.

- I don’t go there **any longer**.
- There isn’t **any more** milk in the fridge.

Again, it’s not correct in standard English to use ‘not’ with ‘no longer’ or ‘no more’.

- NOT: I don’t go there no longer.
- NOT: There isn’t no more milk in the fridge.

In no way, at no time, on no account, under no circumstances.

These are some more expressions with ‘no’. We can also use these with ‘any’ in a negative sentence with ‘not’.

- I am in **no way** responsible for that mistake.
- I was at **no time** aware of the problem.
- You must leave early on **no account**.
- You should open that door **under no circumstances**.

With ‘any’:

- I’m not in **any way** responsible for that mistake.
- I wasn’t aware of the problem at **any time**.
- You mustn’t leave early on **any account**.
- You shouldn’t open the door **under any circumstances**.



Never, seldom, rarely, hardly, scarcely, barely

We also use these words to make the meaning of a sentence negative.

- I have **never** seen such a beautiful view.
- I **seldom** eat fast food.
- She **rarely** goes to parties.
- He **hardly** noticed the change.
- They had **scarcely** arrived when they left again.
- You've **barely** eaten.

Negative intensifiers

Finally, we can make negatives stronger by using words that emphasise that there is 'absolutely none' or 'absolutely nothing' of something.

'At all'

This usually goes either after the negative word mid-sentence, or at the end of the sentence.

- We were not **at all** interested. (We were absolutely not interested.)
- We were not interested **at all**. (We were absolutely not interested.)

'Whatever'

This usually goes after a noun, at the end of a sentence.

- We have no idea **whatever**. (This means 'we have absolutely no idea'.)
- There is no food **whatever**. (This means we have 'we have absolutely no food'.)

'In the slightest'

This usually goes after the adjective, at the end of a sentence.

- I'm not tired **in the slightest**. (I'm not a little bit tired.)
- She wasn't worried **in the slightest**. (She wasn't a little bit worried.)



Inversion in negative sentences

Sometimes when we use a negative adverb like 'never' or 'seldom', we use inversion to make the sentence more formal or make the meaning stronger. This means we put the negative word at the beginning of the sentence, and then the auxiliary verb and then the subject.

- **Never** have I seen such a beautiful view. (This is stronger and more formal than 'I have never seen such a beautiful view')
- **Seldom** do I eat fast food. (This is stronger and more formal than 'I seldom eat fast food'.)



Using Conjunctions in Negative Sentences

We can use conjunctions to connect negative ideas or show contrast between a negative and a positive idea.

‘Nor’

We can use ‘nor’ to connect two negative ideas. When we use ‘nor’, the auxiliary verb comes before the subject. This is another example of inversion after a negative word. In this case, both parts of the sentence have a negative meaning.

- She didn’t answer the phone, **nor** did she reply to the email. (The auxiliary ‘did’ comes before the subject ‘she’.)
- I don’t like coffee, **nor** do I like tea. (‘Do’ comes before the subject ‘I’.)

‘Neither ... nor’

‘Neither ... nor’ connects two things (nouns, verbs, adjectives, or clauses) and shows that both are negative.

- She likes **neither** tea nor coffee. (two nouns)
- The film was **neither** interesting nor funny. (two adjectives)
- He will **neither** attend the meeting nor will he submit the report. (two clauses)

‘Not only ... but also’

This makes the sentence stronger. It’s grammatically negative because it includes ‘not’, but actually it emphasises that both of the ideas are true.

- I’m **not only** tired, **but also** hungry.



‘Either’ and ‘neither’

We often use ‘either’ or ‘neither’ to talk about two options in a negative way.

‘Either’ is used in negative sentences with ‘not’ when there are two specific options and both are not true.

- I **don’t** want **either** meal! (There are two meals, and I don’t want the first or the second.)
- She **didn’t** like **either** option. (She didn’t like the first or the second option.)
- He **hasn’t** visited **either** school. (He hasn’t visited the first school or the second.)

‘Neither’ is used without ‘not’ when there are two specific options and both are not true.

- **Neither** meal is good. (Both meals are not good.)
- She liked **neither** option. (She didn’t like the first option or the second.)
- **Neither** school has a library. (Both schools do not have a library.)



Negative Short Responses

‘Neither’ to agree with a negative sentence

When someone says a negative sentence, sometimes we want to agree with the negative. We can use ‘neither’ to mean ‘also not’.

We put ‘neither’ first, then the verb, and then the subject. The subject can be a noun or a pronoun.

- A: I’m not from New York. B: **Neither am I** (= I am also not from New York).
- A: I don’t like spicy food. B: **Neither do I.** (= I also don’t like spicy food)
- A: She doesn’t watch horror movies. B: **Neither does he.** (= He also doesn’t watch horror movies)

‘So’ and ‘not’ in responses

We often use ‘so’ and ‘not’ to answer positive or negative statements without repeating the full sentence.

We use ‘so’ to agree with a positive statement.

- A: Has he already left?
- B: **I hope so.** (positive answer)

We use ‘not’ to agree with a negative statement or give a negative answer.

- A: Did he manage?
- B: **I guess not.** (negative answer)



Double Negatives: What to Avoid

In English, we don't usually use two negatives together. If we use 'not' to make the verb negative, the pronoun or determiner should be positive.

- She doesn't know anybody.

Here, 'doesn't know' is a negative verb with 'not', so we use 'anybody'.

- NOT: She doesn't know nobody.

'Nobody' is already negative, so this is a double negative and isn't correct.

- They don't want anything to eat.

Here, 'don't want' is a negative verb with 'not', so we use 'anything'.

- NOT: They don't want nothing to eat.

'Nothing' is already negative, so this is a double negative and isn't correct.

Double negatives are not grammatically correct in standard English. However, in some dialects and in informal speech, native speakers sometimes use them. It's best to avoid them in formal or professional situations.

More common mistakes to avoid

Even advanced learners sometimes make mistakes with negatives. Here are the most common ones to look out for.

Using the past simple form after 'didn't'.

- I didn't went. (not correct)
- I didn't go. (correct)

Remember: After 'didn't', the verb must be in the base form, not the past simple.

Forgetting 'do/does/did' in negatives

- He not like pizza. (not correct)
- He doesn't like pizza. (correct)

Remember: In the simple present and the simple past, with all verbs except 'be', we need to add an auxiliary verb (do/does/did) for negatives.



Using 'wasn't / weren't' incorrectly

- I didn't hungry. (not correct)
- I wasn't hungry. (correct)

Remember: With the past simple of 'be', we use 'wasn't' or 'weren't' alone. We don't need 'didn't'.

Using the wrong form with modal verbs

- He mustn't to go. (not correct)
- He mustn't go. (correct)

Remember: After modals (must, can, will, should), we use the base form, without 'to'.

Adding '-s' to the main verb after 'does/doesn't'

- She doesn't likes reading. (not correct)
- She doesn't like reading. (correct)

Remember: The '-s' is already in 'doesn't', so the main verb doesn't need it.

Wrong word order with 'neither'

- A: I'm not tired. B: Neither I am. (not correct)
- A: I'm not tired. B: Neither am I. (correct)

Remember: The verb comes before the subject after 'neither'.

Using 'any' in positive sentences.

- I have any friends here.
- I don't have any friends here. / I have some friends here.

Remember: 'Any' is usually used with negatives, not positive sentences.



Conclusion

Important things to remember

A negative sentence tells us something is not true or that something doesn't happen.

We usually form negatives by adding 'not' (or a contraction with the auxiliary: don't, isn't, can't, won't).

We use negative questions when we're surprised that something isn't true.

We can use other words apart from 'not' to express a negative meaning. Some of these words need inversion.

- No, none, any
- Nothing, nobody, nowhere
- No more, no longer
- Never, seldom, rarely, under no circumstances, on no account
- Nor, neither