

## Avoiding Double Negatives

### Reading and Discussion

Negative equals **no**. It is the opposite of a positive word. A negative word can mean: **no, not, none, or nothing**.

- **Negative:** No, Nothing
- **Positive:** Yes, Something

A negative word tells us that something is **not**, rather than telling us what it is.

- **Nothing:** Nobody, Nobody, Never, None

These are all negative words. They are the opposite of positive words.

- **Something:** Somebody, Somebody, Ever, Some

While we often need to use negative words in a sentence to get our meaning across, we should use only **one** negative word in a sentence. If we use more than one, we end up with a double negative.

Double negatives happen when someone uses two negative words in a sentence. This usually results in very bad grammar. Look at the sentence below:

- I **don't** have **no** candy.

This is a double negative. The correct sentence should be:

- I don't have any candy.

One of the most commonly used negative words is the word **not**. This word is also used in many contractions – the shortened form of two words. For example:

- **Are not** is shortened into the contraction **aren't**.
- **Do not** is shortened into the contraction **don't**.

When you use the word **not** in a contraction, it is shortened to **n't**. Any contraction that has **n't** on the end is a negative word.

Look at these negative contractions:

- aren't, doesn't, couldn't, didn't, haven't, wasn't, mustn't, wouldn't.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

When we use negative contractions in a sentence, the same rule about double negatives applies. Use only **one** negative word in a sentence. An easy way to change a sentence with a double negative is to either make one of the words positive, or take one of the negative words away. For example:

- I **don't** have **nothing** to wear to Grandma's birthday party.

These double negatives result in bad grammar. Change one negative word to positive. Change nothing to **anything**. Or take out the contraction **don't** and leave in **nothing**.

- I don't have anything to wear to Grandma's birthday party; or
- I have nothing to wear to Grandma's birthday party.

These sentences tell us what we want to know. The writer has nothing to wear to Grandma's birthday party.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activities

### **Activity A:** Let's Review.

1. A negative word means \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A negative word is the opposite of a \_\_\_\_\_ word.
3. A negative word tells us what something is \_\_\_\_\_, instead of telling us what it is.
4. If we use two negative words in a sentence, this is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. One of the most commonly used negative words is \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Any contraction that ends with the letters \_\_\_\_\_ is a negative word.

**Activity B:** Let's review negative contractions. Read the words below. Write the two words that make up each contraction on the blank line. The first example has been done for you.

1. mustn't                      **must not** \_\_\_\_\_
2. doesn't                      \_\_\_\_\_
3. haven't                      \_\_\_\_\_
4. wasn't                      \_\_\_\_\_
5. couldn't                      \_\_\_\_\_
6. shouldn't                      \_\_\_\_\_

What word did all these contractions end with? \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity C:** Oh no! A careless writer has put double negatives in the sentences below. Rewrite the sentences by taking out one negative word **or** by changing a negative word to a positive one.

1. My sister doesn't have no coloring books to share.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Ted can't write none of his report.  
\_\_\_\_\_.
3. My sister, Susan, won't do nothing around the house.  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

### Activity A

1. A negative word means no.
2. A negative word is the opposite of a positive word.
3. A negative word tells us what something is not, instead of telling us what it is.
4. If we use two negative word in a sentence, this is called a double negative.
5. One of the most commonly used negative words is not.
6. Any contraction that ends with the letters n't is a negative word.

### Activity B

- |              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. mustn't   | <u>must not</u>   |
| 2. doesn't   | <u>does not</u>   |
| 3. haven't   | <u>have not</u>   |
| 4. wasn't    | <u>was not</u>    |
| 5. couldn't  | <u>could not</u>  |
| 6. shouldn't | <u>should not</u> |

What word did all these contractions end with? **Not**

### Activity C

1. My sister doesn't have any coloring books to share.
2. Ted can't write any of his report.
3. My sister, Susan, won't do anything around the house.