

## No, Not, Never Avoiding the Double Negative

### Reading and Discussion

Negative words mean **no**, **not**, **nothing**, or **none**. They are the opposite of positive words.

- **Negative:** No, nothing;
- **Positive:** Yes, something.

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

- That is **not** my bike; it is Jane's.

The bike is **not** the writer's bike. It belongs to someone else. It belongs to Jane.

Although most negative words begin with the letter **n**, some words such as **hardly** and **barely** are also negative. Here are some more negative words:

- **nobody, never, nothing, not, none, neither, nowhere, nor**

While we often need to use these negative words in a sentence to get our meaning across, we should use only **one** per sentence. If we use two negative words in a sentence, we end up with a double negative. Double negatives happen when someone writes a sentence using two negative words. This usually results in very bad grammar. Look at the sentence below.

- He does **not** have **no** more money.

The correct way to write the sentence would be to avoid the double negative.

- He does **not** have any more money.

If we use the adverb **not** there shouldn't be any other negative words in the sentence. Just like in math, if you use two negatives, you end up with a positive. If we use two negative words in the sentence above, the sentence really means he **has** more money. This is the exact opposite of what the writer wanted to say! The negative words cancel each other out and make a positive statement. To avoid using a double negative in a sentence, use only one negative word.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Activities

Rewrite the incorrect sentences below by getting rid of the double negatives.

1. I don't have no idea where Mark went.

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2. Susan doesn't know nobody at the dance.

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3. Tim never does nothing to help John.

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4. Grandma doesn't go nowhere in the winter.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

Answers may vary as there are several correct choices. Some students may use the following:

1. I don't have any idea where Mark went.
2. Susan doesn't know anyone at the dance.
3. Tim never does anything to help John.
4. Grandma doesn't go anywhere in the winter.