

Avoiding Double Negatives

A negative is a word that means "no" or "not." Some common negatives are **no, no one, not, none, never, nothing, nowhere, and nobody**. Contractions formed with not are also negatives.

Two negatives used in the same sentence are called a double negative. **Double negatives** should be avoided because they make the meaning of a sentence unclear.

Wrong: Motorcars won't never work well! **Right:** Motorcars will never work well!

Right: Motorcars won't ever work well!

Notice that a double negative can be corrected in different ways. In the second and third sentences above, an affirmative, or "yes" word, has been substituted for one of the negatives. This chart shows the affirmatives for other words.

Negative	Affirmative	Negative	Affirmative
no	any, a, one, some	nothing	anything, something
no one	anyone, someone	nowhere	anywhere, somewhere
none	all, some	nobody	anybody, somebody

Summary * Some negative words, such as not, are adverbs. Avoid using two negative words in the same sentence.

Guided Practice

Tell which word makes each sentence negative.

1. Some people had (nothing, anything) good to say about the early automobile. _____
2. Those newfangled motorcars will (ever, never) replace horses. _____
3. A car (can't, can) go as fast or as far as a train. _____

Practice

A. Write each sentence. Use the word in parentheses () that makes the sentence negative.

4. In 1903 nine out of ten roads in the United States (weren't, were) paved. _____
5. (No, A) motorist could escape dust and deep mud. _____
6. (None, Some) of the first cars were comfortable. _____
7. (Anybody, Nobody) could drive for long in comfort. _____
8. Gas stations were (nowhere, anywhere) to be found. _____
9. There were (no, some) driving tests for motorists either. _____
10. Horses (could, couldn't) stand the noisy automobiles. _____
11. (No one, Anyone) could control a horse terrified by a car. _____
12. There seemed (an, no) end to the accidents caused by cars. _____
13. Saying "Get a horse!" was (no, a) joke back then. _____

B. Rewrite each sentence to correct the double negative.

14. In 1900 carmakers couldn't persuade nobody that cars would replace horses and trains someday.

15. Cars couldn't go nowhere without gasoline and service.

16. Nobody had never printed any decent road maps.

17. There wasn't no safe way to drive on unpaved roads.

18. Alice Ramsey didn't have no easy time as the first woman to drive across the United States.

C. Add words to make each word group into a negative sentence. Write the sentence. Be careful to avoid double negatives.

19. A long, hot ride was not _____.

20. No one expected that _____.

21. The car never failed to _____.

22. The early cars had endurance, but _____.

23. Sometimes when the car's motor stopped, _____.