# 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. _____

LIVEWORKSHEETS

**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.

_____

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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, _____.

LIVEWORKSHEETS