

NEGATION

In English when we want to express an opposite meaning, give a negative reply, say something is not true or, perhaps, show a negative attitude toward something, we use **negation** or negatives.

In the expression '*I disagree*', the prefix 'dis-' negates the positive word '*agree*', and conveys an opposite meaning. Responding with '*no*' or '*never*' gives a negative reply. Using 'n't' in '*he wasn't late*', tells us that something is not true – the person in fact was not late.

If someone says '*John's hair is rather long*', they would be thinking that his hair is somewhat too long; using 'rather' conveys the message that they disapprove. These are some of the many different ways of negating and forming **negatives**, which are widely used in both formal and informal, spoken and written English.

STUDY TIPS

Remember that it is important to expand on your answers in the Speaking test, especially in Section 3.

When expressing your opinion or providing an explanation, incorporate some subtle negative meanings and use a variety of different negative forms in your answers. This will allow you to demonstrate your use of particular grammatical forms and precise meanings of negative words.

Being able to disagree in a variety of ways will give you a greater command of communication events.

Forming Negatives / Conveying Negative Meanings

There are various ways of forming negatives or conveying a negative meaning in English. These can be broadly categorised under the following headings:

- negative statements/questions
- negative affixes
- double negatives
- words with negative meanings
- expressions emphasising the negative
- negative transfer

The table on the following pages summarises the forms and uses of negatives for each of the categories.



Negation	Form and Use
<p>Negative statements/ questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adding <i>not</i> or <i>-n't</i> to a verb or an auxiliary; this is the most common way of negating
	<p>Examples: She 's not talking. It isn't raining. He might not attend the meeting. I didn't see the film. Don't worry! Not having attended the class, I couldn't complete my assignment. Why wasn't she invited? Did he not see the exit sign? Wouldn't it be nice to see the Great Wall of China?</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> negative words/expressions: <i>not, nor, nothing, nowhere, neither, never, no, nobody, none, no one, neither...nor, not only</i> if a negative word is used in a sentence then such words as <i>any, anyone, anybody, anything, anywhere</i> etc., are used
	<p>Examples: The test was not easy. He was nowhere to be seen. There was no comment from the journalist. Have you been to the Middle East? – No, I haven't. Are there any biscuits left? – Sorry, none. Did you say the table or chair? – Neither. He never has anything nice to say about the company.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> polite requests or offers using <i>not</i>
	<p>Examples: Wouldn't you like to attend the Grand Prix? Why don't you go with me to the beach?</p>
<p>Negative affixes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> negative prefixes or suffixes can be added to verbs, nouns and adjectives to give them an opposite meaning
<p>a-, an-</p>	<p>atypical, amoral</p>
<p>anti-</p>	<p>antidote, antibiotic, anticlockwise, antidepressant, anti-oxidant, antiperspirant, antisocial, anti-virus</p>
<p>contra-</p>	<p>contraception, contradiction, contraindication</p>
<p>counter-</p>	<p>counteract, counterbalance, counterclockwise, counterfeit, counterintelligence, countersign</p>
<p>de-</p>	<p>decaffeinated, decode, decentralise, decontaminate, deregulate, devalue</p>
<p>dis-</p>	<p>disappear, disengage, disenfranchise, disfavour, dislike, disheartening, dishonest, dishonour, disconnect, disapprove, disadvantage, disinformation, dissimilar, disloyal, disorganised, displeased, displeasure, disprove, disrespect, dissatisfaction</p>
<p>dys-</p>	<p>dysfunctional, dyslexia</p>
<p>il-</p>	<p>illegal, illegible, illiterate, ill-conceived, ill-defined, illegitimate, ill-equipped, ill-informed, illogical, ill-prepared, ill-suited, ill-tempered</p>
<p>im-</p>	<p>imbalance, immaterial, immoderate, imperfect, impossible, immobile, immodest, immoral, impersonal, impolite, imprecise</p>



STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

<p>Negative affixes continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> negative prefixes or suffixes can be added to verbs, nouns and adjectives to give them an opposite meaning
<p>in-</p>	<p>inability, inaccurate, inaction, inactive, inadequate, inadvisable, inapplicable, inappropriate, inarticulate, inaudible, incapable, incoherent, incompatible, inconclusive, inconsistent, incorrect, incurable, indecent, indistinct, ineffective, inexcusable, inflexible, insignificant, invisible, involuntary</p>
<p>ir-</p>	<p>irrational, irreconcilable, irregular, irrelevant, irresponsible, irreversible</p>
<p>mal-</p>	<p>maladjusted, maladministration, malcontent, malfunction, malnourished, malpractice, maltreat</p>
<p>mis-</p>	<p>misadventure, misapply, misbehave, miscalculate, misconduct, misdiagnose, misfortune, misguided, misinterpret, misjudge, mislay, mislead, mispronounce, misread, misrepresent, misspell, mistreat, mistrust, misunderstand, misuse</p>
<p>non-</p>	<p>non-alcoholic, non-aligned, non-attendance, non-cooperation, non-essential, non-existent, non-fiction, non-fat, non-negotiable, non-payment, non-profit, non-refundable, non-renewable, non-scientific, nonsense, non-smoker, non-specific, non-toxic, non-verbal</p>
<p>un-</p>	<p>unable, unacceptable, unapologetic, unattractive, unavailable, unbalanced, unbelievable, uncertain, uncompromising, unconfirmed, uncomfortable, unconscious, uncontrollable, uncover, undesirable, uneducated, unemployed, unfair, unfit, unfortunate, unfriendly, unhealthy, uninformed, unintelligible, unkind, unlikely, unlock, unlucky, unpack, unpleasant, unpopular, unproductive, unproven, unqualified, unreal, unsafe, unstable, unthinkable, unusual, unwanted, unwelcome</p>
<p>-less</p>	<p>careless, endless, heartless, helpless, homeless, lifeless, meaningless, mindless, nameless, pointless, powerless, senseless, speechless, thoughtless, useless, worthless</p>
<p>Double negatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually only one negative is used in a clause or sentence; when two negatives are used they generally cancel each other and have the opposite meaning – a positive meaning; they are used sometimes to emphasise a point or make something less definite
	<p>Examples: Nobody can be unhappy. (=somebody is happy); Our holiday in the tropics was not unpleasant. (=not bad, but not nice either); She didn't misunderstand. (=understood, but in a less definite sense).</p>



STUDY ENGLISH

IELTS PREPARATION

<p>Words with negative meanings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> these words are negative in meaning and suggest a negative attitude; they are not negatives in form
<p>quantifiers</p>	<p><i>few, little, only</i> (=not much)</p>
	<p>Examples: He had few friends after the debacle. Little was known about his whereabouts.</p>
<p>adverbs</p>	<p><i>rarely, seldom</i> (=not often); <i>hardly, scarcely, barely</i> (=almost not); <i>rather, completely, utterly</i></p>
	<p>Examples: John seldom helps with the chores. Things have barely changed since the reforms two years ago. It's rather warm in this room.</p>
<p>verbs</p>	<p><i>avoid, deny, fail, forget</i></p>
	<p>Examples: He failed his test for the second time. Mitchell avoided the jurors' eyes during the trial.</p>
<p>Expressions emphasising the negative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> these are expressions which are added to a negative sentence to emphasise the negative aspect <p><i>at all; whatsoever; ever; in the least; the least bit; in the slightest; a bit</i></p>
	<p>Examples: Jane is not the least bit worried about passing the test. She could barely eat anything at all. There is no need whatsoever to accompany him to the hearing. Do you think he has a chance of getting into the MBA program? – None whatsoever.</p>
<p>Negative transfer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> when introducing a negative idea with such verbs as <i>believe, suppose, think</i>, it is the introductory verb which is negated, not the second verb
	<p>Examples: I don't think you've tried any of the cakes. I don't suppose she'll help us with the work in the garden.</p>
<p>Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the words below are used with <i>not</i> to soften the negative meaning <p><i>very, absolutely, entirely, necessarily</i></p>
	<p>Examples: His actions were not very helpful. Because it's expensive doesn't necessarily mean it's the best.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>not</i> can be used for contrast in order to emphasise something positive
	<p>Example: It's not a five-star, but it is comfortable.</p>