

# NEGATION

A **Negative Sentence** expresses an action that is not happening. In English, you can negate a sentence using the word “**not**” (e.g., “It is raining” → “It is *not* raining”) or the words “**do not**” (e.g., “I like ice cream” → “I *do not* like ice cream”). This resource teaches the proper grammar for negating sentences as well as when to use “not” and when to use “do not.”

## DETERMINING WHETHER TO USE “NOT” OR “DO NOT”

To determine if you should use “not” or “do not” to negate a sentence, you can start by counting the number of “verb parts.” Sentences with one verb part use “do not,” while sentences with two or more parts always just use “not.”

Affirmative Sentence	Number of Verb Parts	Implementing “Not” or “Do Not”
I <i>like</i> ice cream.	like = one part	I <i>do not</i> like ice cream.
I <i>am running</i> to the store.	am running = two parts	I am <i>not</i> running to the store.
I <i>have been studying</i> for hours.	have been studying = three parts	I have <i>not</i> been studying for hours.

## ONE PART VERBS: NEGATE WITH “DO/DOES/DID NOT”

Here are a few rules for properly negating sentences that only have one verb part:

- Use a form of the word “do” and the word “not” to negate sentences with only one verb part** (i.e., verbs in Simple Present Tense or Simple Past Tense).  
Example 1: I like soda. → I do not like soda.  
Example 2: We study a lot. → We do not study a lot.
- Use “does not” for the third person present tense.**  
Example 1: She walks to school. → She does not walk to school.  
Example 2: He ate breakfast. → He did not eat breakfast.
- Use “did not” if the sentence is in past tense.**  
Example 1: He ate breakfast. → He did not eat breakfast.  
Example 2: I cooked dinner. → I did not cook dinner.
- Change the negated verb to its main form**, dropping the -s or -ed after the verb (e.g., “runs” → “run” and “jumped” → “jump”).

Example 1: They climbed the mountain. → They did not climb the mountain.

Example 2: She sings a lot. → She does not sing a lot.

5. If the verb is a form of “be,” only use the word “not” to negate the sentence.

Example 1: I am happy → I am not happy

Example 2: He is tired → He is not tired

TWO OR MORE PART VERBS: NEGATIVE WITH “NOT”

If the verb has two or more parts, use the word “not” to negate the sentence. The word “not” should be written directly after the first verb part.

Affirmative Sentences	Negative Sentences
I <i>am walking</i> .	I <i>am not walking</i> .
You <i>should play</i> soccer.	You <i>should not play soccer</i> .
We <i>might study</i> tomorrow.	We <i>might not study tomorrow</i> .
They <i>had cleaned</i> the kitchen.	They <i>had not cleaned</i> the kitchen.
I <i>have been running</i> for a long time.	I <i>have not been running</i> for a long time.
She <i>has worked</i> there for a year.	She <i>has not worked</i> there for a year.

\* This information comes from the chapter “Key 16: Negating,” in *Keys to Teaching Grammar to English Language Learners: A Practical Handbook*, by Keith S. Folse.

PRACTICE NOW