



Understanding double negatives

A **double negative** is when **two** negative words are used together in the same sentence.

If the **two negative** words are talking about the same thing, they **cancel each other out** - so the message becomes **positive**. This is confusing and it is a major mistake if you're in a formal situation (for example, writing a letter).

Examples of negatives:

Negative words	Negative verbs
no, not, none no-one, nothing, nowhere neither, nobody, never	doesn't, isn't, wasn't wouldn't, couldn't, shouldn't won't, can't, don't

If **any** two of the above words are combined in the same idea, the sentence will be positive (the opposite to what you intended).

E.g. *I am not going to pay no bills.*

← This actually means: I am going to pay some bills.

E.g. *She can't make friends with nobody.*

← This actually means: She can make friends with somebody.

Now here are these two examples without the double negative mistake:

I am not going to pay any bills.

OR

I am going to pay no bills.

She can't make friends with anybody.

OR

She can make friends with nobody.

} All have only one negative and therefore have a negative meaning

Negative + negative = positive. So only use one negative word in a sentence when you want to say that something is negative.