

Negatives

Negatives aren't too tricky, as long as you know where the verb is...

Use 'ne ... pas' to say 'not'

- 1) In English, you change a sentence to mean the opposite by adding 'not'.
- 2) In French, you have to add two words — 'ne' and 'pas'.
- 3) They go either side of the verb:

Je suis une fille. — I am a girl.

This is the verb. The 'ne' goes in front of it, and the 'pas' goes after.

Je ne suis pas une fille. — I am not a girl.

- 4) For verbs in the perfect tense (see p.52), put the 'ne' and 'pas' around the bit of 'avoir' or 'être'.

Je n'ai pas mangé.

— I have not eaten.

Il n'est pas venu à la fête.

— He has not come to the party.

Don't forget to replace the 'e' in 'ne' with an apostrophe when the verb begins with a vowel or sometimes when it begins with a 'h'.

Put 'ne pas' in front of an infinitive

- 1) As you've seen above, 'ne' and 'pas' usually go either side of the verb.
- 2) But, if the verb is an infinitive, the 'ne' and 'pas' both go in front of it.

Je préfère lire un livre.

— I prefer to read a book.

Je préfère ne pas lire un livre.

— I prefer not to read a book.

See p.48 for more on infinitives.

- 3) Sometimes, instead of using the imperative (p.67-68) to give an order, the infinitive can be used for commands. To make a negative command using the infinitive, just put 'ne pas' in front.

Mettez le beurre dans le bol.

— Put the butter in the bowl.

Ne pas mettre le beurre dans le bol.

— Do not put the butter in the bowl.

Never — 'ne ... jamais'; nothing — 'ne ... rien'

- 1) Some negatives aren't as straightforward as just adding 'ne' and 'pas'.
- 2) To say things like 'no longer' or 'never', you have to change the 'pas' bit.
- 3) Just remember that 'ne' goes in front of the verb and the word replacing 'pas' goes after the verb.

English negative	French negative	Example
no longer (not any more)	ne ... plus	Je ne chante plus. (I no longer sing. / I don't sing any more.)
nobody (not anybody)	ne ... personne	Je ne connais personne. (I know nobody. / I don't know anybody.)
never (not ever)	ne ... jamais	Il ne va jamais au café. (He never goes to the café. / He doesn't ever go to the café.)
nothing (not anything)	ne ... rien	Nous n'avons rien. (We have nothing. / We don't have anything.)
not a single... (not any / not one)	ne ... aucun(e)	Tu n'as aucune pomme? (You don't have a single apple? / You don't have any apples?)
neither ... nor	ne ... ni ... ni	Je ne vais ni à Paris ni à Vichy. (I neither go to Paris nor to Vichy.)

Some articles change to 'de' after a negative

After a negative, indefinite and partitive articles (see p.5) like 'un', 'une', 'du', 'de la' and 'des' are usually replaced by just 'de':

Je n'ai pas de chocolat.

— I haven't got any chocolate.

Il n'a plus de bonbons.

— He doesn't have any more sweets.



"GIVE ME CHOCOLATE!"