

NIGHTMARISH NEGATIVES

Correcting Double Negatives

A double negative is a sentence that has two negative words.

Example: I never saw nobody.

In the example there are two negative words: *never* and *nobody*. Double negatives are incorrect in formal writing. A sentence should have only one negative. A correct way to write the sentence would be: I never saw anybody.

Common negative words and phrases include:

no, not, nobody, never, nothing, no one, nor, nowhere, none, cannot, isn't, didn't, won't, wasn't, and any other contraction with *n't*.

Other words are considered a negative although they don't contain *not* or *no*. They are: *barely*, *hardly*, and *scarcely*.

Rewrite each sentence below correcting the double negative.

1. He can't talk nicely to nobody.

2. The lady won't never find her lost cat.

3. There aren't no pictures in that book.

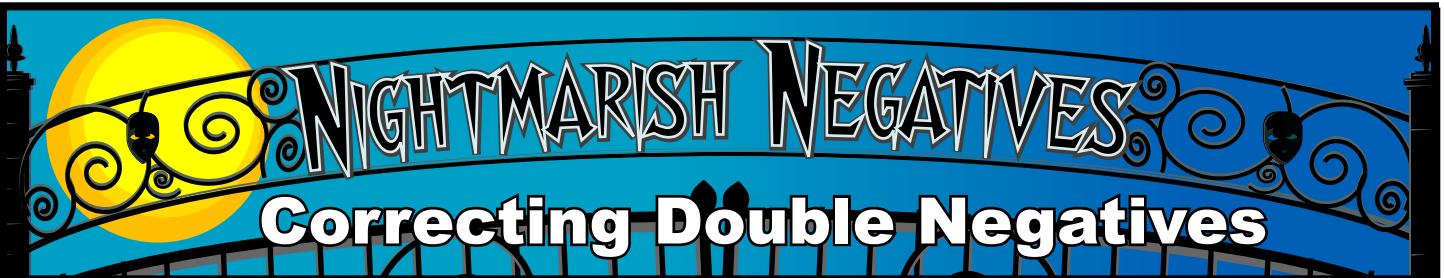
4. Jose never told the story to no one.

5. They barely had no sandwiches left at the picnic.

6. The shoppers looked for bargains at the store, but there weren't none.

7. She couldn't hardly say her own name.

8. The teacher hasn't never told no one about her children.



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Students should rewrite the sentence one of the following ways:

Rewrite each sentence below correcting the double negative.

1. He can't talk nicely to nobody.

He can't talk nicely to anybody. He can talk nicely to nobody.

2. The lady won't never find her lost cat.

The lady won't ever find her lost cat. The lady will never find her lost cat.

3. There aren't no pictures in that book.

There aren't any pictures in that book. There are no pictures in that book.

4. Jose never told the story to no one.

Jose never told the story to anyone. Jose told the story to no one.

5. They barely had no sandwiches left at the picnic.

They barely had any sandwiches left at the picnic.

6. The shoppers looked for bargains at the store, but there weren't none.

The shoppers looked for bargains at the store, but there weren't any.

The shoppers looked for bargains at the store, but there were none.

7. She couldn't hardly say her own name.

She could hardly say her own name.

8. The teacher hasn't never told no one about her children.

The teacher hasn't ever told anyone about her children. The teacher has never told anyone about her children.

Common negative words and phrases include:

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