



How to Say Negative Things in French

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LANGUAGES

Ages 11-16



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What Are French Negatives?

When you want to say something is **not** happening or you want to say **no** in French, you don't just add a word at the end like in English. French speakers use a special system where they sandwich a negative phrase around the verb. It's like putting your negative words on both sides of the action word.

Think of it like wrapping a present—you put paper on both the front and back of the box. In French negatives, you put negative words before and after the verb.

The Most Common French Negative: Ne...Pas

The most important negative in French is **ne...pas**, which means **not**. You put **ne** before the verb and **pas** after it. For example: '**Je ne suis pas fatigué**' means '**I am not tired**'. The word order matters—this is very different from English where we just add 'not' after the verb.

Here's another example: '**Il n'aime pas les légumes**' means '**He does not like vegetables**'. Notice that when the verb starts with a vowel sound, the **ne** becomes **n'** to make it easier to say.

Think of it like bookends on a shelf—the **ne** and **pas** hold the verb snugly in the middle.

Other Important French Negatives

French has other negative pairs too! **Ne...jamais** means **never**, so '**Je ne vais jamais au cinéma**' means '**I never go to the cinema**'. **Ne...rien** means **nothing**, and **ne...personne** means **no one**.

There's also **ne...plus**, which means **no longer** or **not anymore**. If you say '**Je ne joue plus au football**', you mean '**I don't play football anymore**'.

Why Is This Important?

Understanding French negatives is **essential** for speaking and writing in **French** correctly. Native speakers use these patterns constantly, and getting them right shows you really understand how the language works. When you learn languages, these small grammar patterns are the building blocks that let you express yourself clearly and naturally.