

## English Grammar: Negating the Second Verb

Consider a phrase with two verbs:

When I see a sad film at the cinema, **I try to cry**.

To negate the first verb, we use an auxiliary verb:

When I see a sad film at the cinema, I **don't try** to cry.

However, to negate the second verb, we use "not":

When I see a sad film at the cinema, I try **not to cry**.

Sometimes, the negation of the first verb gives a different meaning from the negation of the second verb:

I decided to take the case.

- I **didn't decide** to take the case.
- I decided **not to take** the case.

He regretted going to Europe. (*the verb "regret" demands a gerund*)

- He **didn't regret** going to Europe.
- He regretted **not going** to Europe.

Sometimes the meanings are similar:

When they selected the players for the team, I expected to be chosen.

- When they selected the players for the team, I **didn't expect** to be chosen.
- When they selected the players for the team, I expected **not to be** chosen.

It is also possible for both verbs in a phrase to be negated:

- I **didn't decide not to take** the case.
- He **didn't regret not going** to Europe.
- When they selected the players for the team, I **didn't expect not to be** chosen.

Note 1: It is not grammatically correct to put the word "not" between "to" and the verb (it's called "a split infinitive"):

He decided **to not take** the case.



He decided **not to take** the case.



Note 2: If a sentence contains two phrases, then this rule doesn't apply, since two phrases are grammatically separate and so they form two distinct phrases. If a sentence has a second phrase, it will also have a second "subject" before the verb, since every phrase must have a verb and a subject. Here is an example:

- Sentence with two phrases: I hope (that) he wins the lottery.
- First phrase negated: I **don't hope** (that) he wins the lottery.
- Second phrase negated: I hope (that) he **doesn't win** the lottery.
- Both phrases negated: I **don't hope** (that) he **doesn't win** the lottery.

(in sentences with two phrases, the connecting word "that" is optional)

**Exercise.** For each given sentence, negate:

- a) the first verb
- b) the second verb
- c) both verbs

1. I want to eat.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

2. I like receiving visitors.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

3. He expected to arrive early.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

4. I agree to talk with him.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

5. I regret learning French.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

6. We enjoy being at home.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

7. I asked John to help me.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_

8. I think that he understands me.

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_