

Negation

You have already learned how to make simple affirmative statements.

Ella habla inglés She speaks English.
Él es profesor He is a professor.

To make a sentence negative, place the word “no” before the verb.

Ella no habla inglés She doesn't speak English.
Él no es profesor He is not a professor.

When the answer to a question is negative, two negative words are required.

¿Habla Ud. español? (Do you speak Spanish?)
No. No hablo español..... (No. I don't speak Spanish.)

¿ Está Gerardo en la clase?..... (Is Gerardo in the class?)
No. Gerardo no está en la clase..... (No. Gerardo is not in the class.)

¿Siempre estudias? (Do you always study?)
No, nunca estudio..... (No, I never study.)

Study the following list of affirmative words and their negative counterparts:

algo (something)
nada (nothing)

alguien..... (somebody)
nadie (nobody)

algún (-o, -a, -os, -as)..... (some, something)
ningún (-o, -a, -os, -as)..... (no, none)

siempre (always)
nunca, jamás..... (never, ever)

también (also)
tampoco (neither, not either)

o . . . o..... (either . . . or)
ni . . . ni (neither . . . nor)

The negative words can be used alone, preceding the verb.

Nadie habla..... Nobody speaks.
Él nunca come He never eats.
Alfredo tampoco baila..... Alfredo doesn't dance either.

The negative words can also be used with the word “no,” following the verb. Note that unlike English, double negatives are acceptable in Spanish.

No habla nadie..... Nobody speaks.
Él no come nunca He never eats.
Alfredo no baila tampoco Alfredo doesn't dance either.

Sometimes, three negative words occur in the same sentence.

No compro nada nunca..... I never buy anything.
Él no compra nada tampoco He doesn't buy anything either.

You can even have four negative words in the same sentence.

Yo no veo nunca a nadie tampoco I never see anybody either.

Unlike English, Spanish does not normally mix negative and affirmative words.

ENGLISH

Maria doesn't need anything.
NOT Maria doesn't need nothing.

SPANISH

María no necesita nada.
NOT María no necesita algo.

Alguno and ninguno drop the -o before a masculine singular noun.

¿Tienes algún libro? No, no tengo ningún libro.

Ninguno(-a) is generally used in the singular.

¿Tienes algunas revistas? No, no tengo ninguna.
¿Tienes algunos libros? No, no tengo ninguno.

The plural of ninguno(-a) is used only when the noun it modifies exists only in plural, or is normally used in plural.

Ningunas vacaciones a Alaska son completas sin una excursión a Mt. McKinley.
No vacation to Alaska is complete without a trip to Mt. McKinley.

In this example “ningunas” is used because “vacaciones” is normally used in plural form.