Avoiding Double Negatives

Purpose: Upon completion of this activity, students will understand what double negatives are and how to correct them. This DLA should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

1. Read the attached handout from St. Cloud State University’s Literacy Education Online. You should print the attached reading ONLY if you would like a hard copy for yourself.

2. Respond to the following:
   A. When were double negatives considered acceptable emphatic constructions? ________________________________
   B. Two negative grammatical constructions result in a ___________________.
   C. List five (5) examples of negative word forms:
      __________     __________     __________     __________     __________
   D. The use of double negatives is not considered proper or standard in English.  T / F  

3. Now, on the back of this sheet, re-write the sentences from below to eliminate the double negatives.

   1. I think the new financial initiative will not last barely a month.
   2. The researcher decided not to run the test again because the results from previous tests were hardly reliable.
   3. Since his last speech gained little acceptance, the writer has not had no request to visit the forum again.
   4. The explorers finally discovered that the place where they landed did not have none of the minerals they wanted.
   5. The pilot could not find nowhere to land.
   6. After being replaced, the pipes did not run no water as expected.
   7. Arizona had scarcely no rain last summer.
   8. The storm rose so quickly that the road crews could not do nothing about clearing the highways.
   9. There is hardly no worse challenge than the one concerning national defense.

4. Take this sheet to a tutor or instructor on duty for a review of your sentences. Correct any errors and determine why they were made. Finally, ask this person to sign below.

__________________        ____________________
Signature                     Date
Double Negatives

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A double negative is the nonstandard usage of two negatives used in the same sentence so that they cancel each other and create a positive. In Shakespeare's day, double negatives were considered emphatic, but today, they are considered grammar mistakes.

Remembering that two negatives form a positive will help you to avoid the "double negative" grammar problem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative + Negative = Positive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative + Positive = Negative</td>
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</table>

Negative Words

The following list contains words that are regarded as negative. If you use them in your sentences once, your statements will be negative.

- no
- not
- none
- nothing
- nowhere
- neither
- nobody
- no one
- hardly
- scarcely
- barely

Using the rule explained above in the box and the list of negative words given, study the following examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Construction</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative + negative</td>
<td>I hardly have none.</td>
<td>I have some.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don't want nothing.</td>
<td>I want something.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Construction</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>negative + positive</td>
<td>I hardly have any.</td>
<td>I have few.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                       | I don't want anything.    | I want nothing.

Note: the usage of double negatives is not considered proper or standard in English. On some occasions, mostly when speaking, the use of double negatives is accepted; however, you must remember that the meaning of these expressions will always be positive.