

“ → “deny / no”

Negation auf Deutsch

Negate

Word of the Day



- **Meaning:** to show something to be wrong or to be the opposite of what was thought, or to cause something to have no effect
- **Origin:** early 17th century; from Latin ‘negat-’ (denied); from the verb ‘negare’

Kein

nicht

nichts

The Three Musketeers of Negation

Let's meet our three key players. They all mean "not" or "no," but are used in very different situations.

(Ich habe ein Auto → Ich habe kein Auto)

1. **Kein:** A "negative article." It replaces ein (a/an) or any other indefinite/non-specific noun.
It declines like ein!
2. **Nicht:** A "negative adverb." It negates everything else – verbs, adjectives, specific nouns, and whole sentences.
3. **Nichts:** A "negative pronoun." It means "nothing." It stands alone.

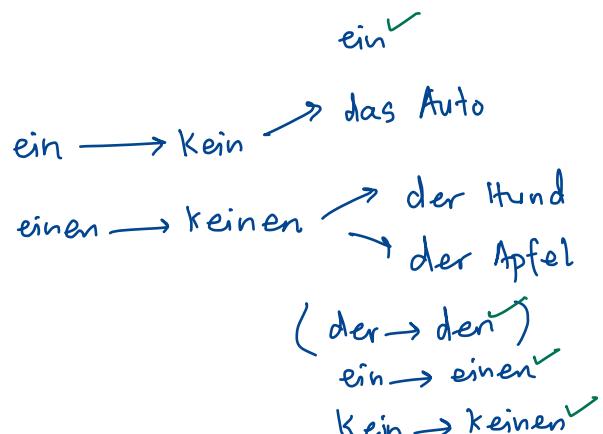
Simple Analogy:

- "I have no apple." → **Kein** (negating the noun "apple")
- "This is not an apple." → **Nicht** (negating the verb "is")
- "I have nothing." → **Nichts** (a pronoun by itself)

Part 1 - Kein (The Negative Article)

Kein is used to negate:

- A noun with an indefinite article (ein, eine).
 - Ich habe einen Hund. → Ich habe keinen Hund.
- A noun with no article.
 - Ich habe Hunger. → Ich habe (keinen) Hunger.
- It must be declined to match the gender (masculine, feminine, neuter), number (singular, plural), and case (Nominative, Accusative, Dative) of the noun it is describing.



-Kein → m/N

-Keine → f/F

Kein → Sing.

Keine → plural

einen (keinen)

einem (keinem)

Kein in Nominative & Accusative

Nominative Case (Subject of the sentence): The "who" or "what" is doing the verb.

Gender	Positive	Negative
Masculine	Das ist <u>ein</u> Apfel.	Das ist <u>kein</u> Apfel.
Feminine	Das ist <u>eine</u> Banane.	Das ist <u>keine</u> Banane.
Neuter	Das ist <u>ein</u> Buch.	Das ist <u>kein</u> Buch.
Plural	Das sind <u>Äpfel.</u> <i>eine</i> <i>die</i>	Das sind <u>keine</u> Äpfel.

Accusative Case (Direct object): The "who" or "what" is being acted upon.

Gender	Positive " <u>(en)</u> "	Negative
Masculine	Ich kaufe <u>einen</u> Apfel.	Ich kaufe <u>keinen</u> Apfel.
Feminine	Ich kaufe <u>eine</u> Banane.	Ich kaufe <u>keine</u> Banane.
Neuter	Ich kaufe <u>ein</u> Buch.	Ich kaufe <u>kein</u> Buch.
Plural	Ich kaufe Bücher.	Ich kaufe <u>keine</u> Bücher.

Notice: The endings for *kein* are identical to those for *ein*.

Kein in Dative Case

Dative Case (Indirect object): The "to whom" or "for whom" the action is done.
(Often follows prepositions like *mit*, *zu*, *aus*, or verbs like *geben*, *helfen*, *danken*)

Gender	Positive	Negative
Masculine	Ich helfe <u>einem</u> Mann. <small>(m.)</small>	Ich helfe <u>keinem</u> Mann.
Feminine	Ich helfe <u>einer</u> Frau. <small>(f.)</small>	Ich helfe <u>keiner</u> Frau.
Neuter	Ich helfe <u>einem</u> Kind.	Ich helfe <u>keinem</u> Kind.
Plural	Ich helfe Kindern.	Ich helfe <u>keinen</u> Kindern. <small>(en)</small>

Key Dative Plural Note: The dative plural always adds an -n to the noun (if it doesn't already have one), as seen in *Kindern**.

Part 2 - Nicht (The Negative Adverb)

Nicht is more flexible and is used to negate:

- ✓ 1. Verbs: Ich schwimme nicht. (I do not swim.)
- ✓ 2. Adjectives: Das Auto ist nicht schnell. (The car is not fast.)
- ✓ 3. Proper Nouns (names): Ich bin nicht Max.
- ✓ 4. Nouns with definite articles (*der*, *die*, *das*): Das ist nicht (der Schlüssel).
- ✓ 5. Prepositional Phrases: Er steht nicht (auf dem Stuhl).
- ✓ 6. Adverbs: Sie fährt nicht oft. (frequently) often → oft
- ✓ 7. Whole Sentences: It is often placed at the end in simple sentences.

(Ich mache Hausaufgabe) nicht

Where to Place *Nicht*?

The placement of *nicht* is crucial and follows key rules:

What is Negated	Example	Position of *Nicht*
The whole sentence	I am not reading.	End: *Ich <u>lese nicht</u> .*
A specific element	I am reading not the book, but the newspaper.	Before the element: *Ich <u>lese nicht das Buch</u> , <u>sondern die Zeitung</u> .*
A <u>prepositional phrase</u>	He is standing not on the table.	Before the phrase: *Er steht <u>nicht auf dem Tisch</u> .*
A <u>time element</u>	I am not today traveling.	Before the element: *Ich reise <u>nicht heute</u> .*
With <u>separable prefixes</u>	Don't come in!	Before the prefix: *Komm <u>nicht herein</u> !*

Rule of Thumb: *Nicht* comes before the element you want to negate. If negating the main verb, it goes to the end.

Nichts (The Negative Pronoun)

Nichts is the simplest of the three. It means "nothing" and is used by itself as a pronoun. It does not change its ending.

- It is always written with a capital 'N' at the beginning of a sentence, but lowercase in the middle.
- It is often used with da-compounds for prepositions (dafür, damit, darin, etc.).

Examples:

- *Ich sehe nichts.* (I see nothing.)
- *Nichts ist wichtig.* (Nothing is important.)
- *Er interessiert sich für nichts.* (He is interested in nothing.)
- *Ich habe nichts dagegen.* (I have nothing against it.)
dafür

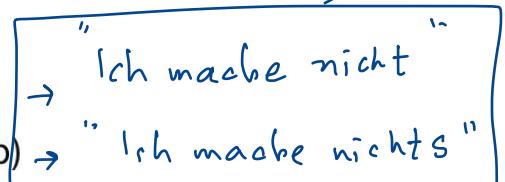
Quick-Fire Comparison & Common Mistakes

Scenario 1: Negating a noun.

- "I have no time." → *Ich habe keine Zeit.* (No article → use kein)
- "This is not the time." → *Das ist nicht die Zeit.* (Definite article die → use nicht)

Scenario 2: Negating an action vs. a thing.

- "I am not working." → *Ich arbeite nicht.* (Negating the verb)
- "I am doing nothing." → *Ich mache nichts.* (Using the pronoun "nothing")



Common Mistake:

Verb

✗ *Ich habe nicht einen Hund.* (This is grammatically possible but sounds like you're contradicting someone: "It's not ONE dog I have, it's two!")

✓ *Ich habe keinen Hund.* (This is the natural way to say "I don't have a dog.")