

Double Negative Quiz

Instructions: Test your double negative knowledge! For each of the example sentences below, identify the double negative – there may be more than one per sentence – and offer a grammatically correct alternative sentence.

1. I don't got no friends.

2. I couldn't hardly wait to get to the party.

3. I did not barely understand what you were saying.

4. I hardly never heard the bells ring.

5. Neither fish nor chicken weren't at the party.

6. It never doesn't rain in Florida.

7. I couldn't not cry at the sad movie.

8. I didn't not want to go to the mall.

9. I wasn't hardly finished when the bell rang.

10. We never don't go for ice cream after a movie.

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Answers:

1. “Don’t” and “no” are both negatives. Instead, the sentence should read, “I’ve got no friends” or “I don’t have friends.”
2. Both “couldn’t” and “hardly” are negatives. Try instead, “I could hardly wait” or “I couldn’t wait.”
3. Both “did not” and “barely” are negative. “I did not understand” and “I barely understood” would both have been acceptable.
4. “Hardly” and “never” are both negatives. “I hardly ever heard” or “I never heard” both work.
5. This sentence contains a double negative because “neither” and “weren’t” are both negatives. “Neither fish nor chicken were at the party” would be fine, as would “Fish and chicken weren’t at the party.”
6. “Never” and “doesn’t” form our double negative. “It doesn’t rain” and “It never rains” would both work fine.
7. This is an example of the author wanting the literal meaning of the double negative. “Couldn’t” and “not” cancel each other out, meaning the author could cry at the sad movie. The double negative phrasing is still awkward. A better choice would be, “I had to cry at the sad movie” or “I couldn’t help crying at the sad movie.”
8. “Didn’t” and “not” cancel each other, making the sentence unclear. Depending on the author’s intent, either “I wanted to go to the mall” or “I didn’t want to go to the mall” would have worked.
9. This sentence may sound just fine if you’re from parts of the American South. However, what works in casual conversation isn’t always valid written down, and “wasn’t” and “hardly” form a classic double negative. Try “I was hardly finished” or “I wasn’t finished” to be grammatically accurate.
10. Here’s another positive statement expressing itself through an invalid double negative. Instead, simply say, “We always go for ice cream after the movie.”