

# Handy Handouts®

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## Teaching Negation Should Not Cause Frustration!

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Negation is part of grammar (the form and function of words). To negate statements or questions, we typically insert the words *no* or *not* into the phrase or sentence. For example, "The dog is playing" is an affirmative, or positive, statement. "The dog is *not* playing" uses negation, which changes the meaning of the statement. Negation can also occur with contractions. For example, *can* and *not* becomes *can't*, *would* and *not* becomes *wouldn't*, and *have* and *not* becomes *haven't*. Other negation contractions include *don't*, *won't*, *shouldn't*, *couldn't*, *aren't*, *weren't*, *hadn't*, *hasn't*, *didn't*, *doesn't*, and *isn't*. Other common words that show negation include *nobody*, *never*, *nothing*, *none*, *no one*, and *nowhere*.

### Ways to Teach Negation



- **Introducing *Not*** — Use familiar items, such as food or toys, to help children learn negation. For example, if you have a cookie and a banana, say, "Show me which one is *not* a cookie." You can also use attributes (features) of the items and say statements like, "Show me which one is *not* round." Use different adjectives to describe the items—what they are, and what they are *not*.



- **Looking at Pictures** — Provide children with pictures. For example, have a picture of a banana, a cookie, and the sun. Say, "Show me which one is *not* yellow," or "Show me which one you do *not* eat." To increase the level of difficulty, use picture scenes or picture books. Begin by asking yes/no questions. For example, if you are looking at a farm scene, ask questions like: "Is there a horse in this picture?" "Is the horse purple?" Then, introduce the word *not* with questions like: "Which animal is *not* little?" "Which animal does *not* have feathers?" "Which animal can you *not* ride?"



- **Following Verbal Directions** — You can also teach negation while playing a game, like *Simon Says*. This game requires children to listen carefully and follow directions only when "Simon Says" is stated before the direction. Incorporate directions that use negation. You can say, "Simon Says, Do *not* point to the floor." You can also give verbal directions that use *conditional negation*. These directions use the words *if* and *not*. For example, you can say, "If you are *not* a girl, jump up and down," "If it is *not* raining, wiggle your fingers," or "Turn around *if* you do *not* have blue eyes."

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## Ways to Teach Negation (continued)



- **Playing Barrier Games** — Another game you can play uses a barrier board and picture scenes. Each side of the barrier has the same scene. You can sit on one side and the child can sit on the other. You should each have the same pieces that you will place on your own scene. The pieces can be magnetic, felt, or Velcro®. Your scene should closely match the child's scene when you are done giving directions to each other. For example, if you have a beach scene, you can say: "Put on three people, but do *not* put them on the sand. Put on all of the beach toys, but *not* the shovel. Put the rest of the people on the sand, but *not* near the sand castle."



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