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Negatives and Double Negatives

Definition

Negatives are words expressing denial or refusal, including not, no, never, and words with negative prefixes (un-, dis-, in-). **Double negatives** occur when two negative words appear in the same clause, which in standard English typically creates a positive meaning or is considered nonstandard.

Example

Type	Example	Explanation
Single Negative	"She does not like seafood."	Standard negative expression
Single Negative	"No one called yesterday."	Standard negative expression
Double Negative (Incorrect)	"I don't need no help."	Nonstandard usage (Correct: "I don't need any help")
Double Negative (Positive)	"The review was not unfavorable."	Creates positive meaning (somewhat favorable)

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Negatives and Double Negatives

Part 1: Multiple Choice Questions

Select the sentence that uses negation correctly.

1. a) Volcanic islands don't form without hot spot activity or tectonic plates colliding.
b) Volcanic islands don't form with no hot spot activity or tectonic plates colliding.
c) Volcanic islands don't never form with hot spot activity or tectonic plates colliding.
d) Volcanic islands don't hardly form with hot spot activity or tectonic plates colliding.

2. a) Scientists haven't found no evidence of underwater volcanic activity in the Hawaiian chain.
b) Scientists haven't found any evidence of underwater volcanic activity in the Hawaiian chain.
c) Scientists haven't never found evidence of underwater volcanic activity in the Hawaiian chain.
d) Scientists can't find hardly no evidence of underwater volcanic activity in the Hawaiian chain.

3. a) It isn't unusual for volcanic islands to sink back into the ocean over millions of years.
b) It isn't not unusual for volcanic islands to sink back into the ocean over millions of years.
c) It ain't never unusual for volcanic islands to sink back into the ocean over millions of years.
d) It isn't unusual for no volcanic islands to sink back into the ocean over millions of years.

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Part 2: Fill in the Blank

Rewrite each sentence to correct any double negatives while maintaining the intended meaning.

The volcanic island couldn't support no vegetation immediately after the eruption.

Correct version:

The geologists haven't never visited an active volcanic island without safety equipment.

Correct version:

There isn't no way to predict exactly when a submarine volcano will break the ocean surface.

Correct version:

The island of Surtsey didn't hardly exist before its emergence from the ocean in 1963.

Correct version:

Without underwater eruptions, there wouldn't be no new volcanic islands forming.

Correct version:

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Negatives and Double Negatives – Answer Key

Part 1: Multiple Choice Questions

1. a) 2. b) 3. a)

Part 2: Fill in the Blank

1. The volcanic island couldn't support any vegetation immediately after the eruption.

OR: The volcanic island could support no vegetation immediately after the eruption.

2. The geologists have never visited an active volcanic island without safety equipment.

OR: The geologists haven't ever visited an active volcanic island without safety equipment.

3. There is no way to predict exactly when a submarine volcano will break the ocean surface.

OR: There isn't any way to predict exactly when a submarine volcano will break the ocean surface.

4. The island of Surtsey didn't exist before its emergence from the ocean in 1963.

OR: The island of Surtsey hardly existed before its emergence from the ocean in 1963.

5. Without underwater eruptions, there would be no new volcanic islands forming.

OR: Without underwater eruptions, there wouldn't be any new volcanic islands forming.