

Negative Polarity Items

(illustrated with *not*)

I *(don't) have *any*.

[but **NOT** *any* as Subject, e.g. **Anyone** *can do that*, which is Modal Polarity.]

I *(don't) *ever* see him. [*ever* = **anywhen*]

He would*(n't) *budge*.

He did*(n't) have a *red cent*.

He has*(n't) been here

in weeks/ages/the longest time.

He may *(not) *arrive until* noon.

[*until* with punctual predicates]

I *(don't) have *much* time left.

I *(don't) have *many* days left.

He has*(n't) arrived *yet*.

You *need**(n't) stare at him.

We *dare* *(not) disturb him.

[*need* & *dare* as modals]

I *(don't) like that *at all*.

It's *(not) that easy *any more*.

He's *(not) *all that smart*.

[*be all that* + adjective/adverb]

He's *(not) *too* bright. [*too* = *very*]

*(Don't) *bother to* close/closing the door.

That should*(n't) *last long, be long, take long*. [but **NOT** *a long time*]

I *can**(n't) *seem to* understand him.

I *would**(n't) *care to* fight with her.

I *would**(n't) *mind* fighting with her.

I *(don't) know *but that/what* he's right.

They *(don't) *drink a drop, do a thing, give a damn/shit, lift a finger, bat an eye, eat a bite, ...* [V+minimal D.O.]

They *can**(n't) *help* themselves.

They *can**(n't) *help* thinking of that.

I saw *(no) people there *to speak of*.

* Asterisk before a sentence indicates ungrammaticality.
 Parentheses indicate optional material that can be omitted.
 Asterisk **before** parenthesis indicates that the elements inside the parentheses are obligatory and **cannot** be omitted.
 Asterisk **after** parenthesis indicates that the elements inside the parentheses are ungrammatical and **must** be omitted.

Negative 'Triggers'

(illustrated with *any*)

I. Overt negatives:

A. *not* [w/ NPI clausemate or complement]

He did*(n't) know *anybody*.

He did*(n't) claim (that) he knew *anybody*.

He did*(n't) think (that) he knew *anybody*.

B. Incorporated negatives

I *doubt* (that) he knows *anybody*.

It's *unlikely* (that) he knows *anybody*.

It's *improbable* (that) he knows *anybody*.

He *dislikes* *anybody*(s) reminding him.

He *prevented* her (from) seeing *anyone*.

I *kept* her *from* telling *anybody*.

C. Negative frequency adverbs

I *seldom/rarely* see *any* of them.

He *hardly/scarcely* knows *anyone*.

D. Quantifiers & quantified adverbs

Only Bill did *any* of the homework.

(*A) *Few* people see *any* use for it.

II. Questions (overt and embedded)

Did you see *anybody*?

How does *anybody* stand this?

I wonder how *anybody* stands this.

III. Hypothetical clauses

Tell me *if* you see *anyone*.

He asked *whether* I saw *anyone*.

Tell me *whatever* *anybody* says.

Check the list again, *lest* we forget *anyone*.

I'll read it aloud, *unless* *anyone* objects.

IV. Comparatives, superlatives, etc.

There's *more/less* here than *anybody* knew.

He *prefers* beer to *any* other drink.

He'd *rather* die than hurt *anyone*.

He's *as* good *as* *anyone* expected.

He's the *fastest* one (that) *anybody* knows of.

I saw him *before* *anybody* (did).

I'm *surprised* (that) he knows *anybody*.

It's *too* dark to recognize *anything*.

He left *without* *anybody* noticing (it).

That's *hard* for *anybody* to do.