



"NO, THANKS,"
and Other Ways to Say "NO"
for ESL Learners

Text & graphics

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LEVEL: For intermediate learners of English

What's the **opposite** of "YES"?

YES	↔	NO
yeah <i>(informal)</i>		nah <i>(informal)</i>
yep <i>(slang)</i>		nope <i>(slang)</i>
yea , aye <i>(formal oral vote)</i>		nay <i>(formal oral vote)</i>
okay		not okay
sure		no way
agree		disagree
affirmative		negative
uh-huh		?unh-?unh

How do you say
"NO"
in your language?

Are you . . . ? → **NO**, I'm not.

No, I'm **not**.

No, I **ain't**. (*slang*)

That's **incorrect**. That's **wrong**. That's **not right**.

Absolutely not! That's **a lie!**

Are you kidding (me)? Who said that? (meaning: That's ridiculous.)

(*man*) Is he . . . ?

No, he **isn't**.

No, he's **not**. (*clear & strong*)

(*woman*) Is she . . . ?

No, she **isn't**.

No, she's **not**.

(*animal or thing*) Is it . . . ?

No, it **isn't**.

No, it's **not**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS : "ARE YOU . . . ?"

. . . *the teacher? the manager? Superman?*

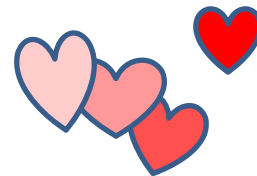
. . . *100 years old? 17 years old? 70 years old?*

. . . *cold? crazy? drunk? in love?*

. . . *buying lunch for everyone? doughnuts? coffee?*

. . . *flying to Las Vegas? driving to Los Angeles? bicycling to San Francisco?*

. . . *getting fat? losing weight? feeling okay?*



Do you . . . ? ⇒ **NO**, I don't.

No, I **don't**.

No, I **do not**. (*clear & strong*)

I **don't like** it.

I **don't want** to (do it).

(*man*) Does he . . . ?

No, he **doesn't**.

(*woman*) Does she . . . ?

No, she **doesn't**.

(*animal or thing*) Does it . . . ?

No, it **doesn't**.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS: "DO YOU . . . ?"

. . . often eat junk food?

. . . have some money I can borrow?

. . . always agree with everything she says?



Don't you babysit for your sister every Sunday? ("Don't you?" = "Did you forget?")

Don't you have a meeting at 1 p.m.?

Don't you have to study?

Q's about ability or availability

Can you . . . ? → **NO**, I can't.

No, I can't.

No, I cannot. (very formal)

I'm sorry, **but I can't.**

I'd really like to, **but I can't.**

(man) Can he . . . ?

No, he can't.

(woman) Can she . . . ?

No, she can't.

(animal or thing) Can it . . . ?

No, it can't.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS: "CAN YOU . . . ?"

. . . *babysit for me?*

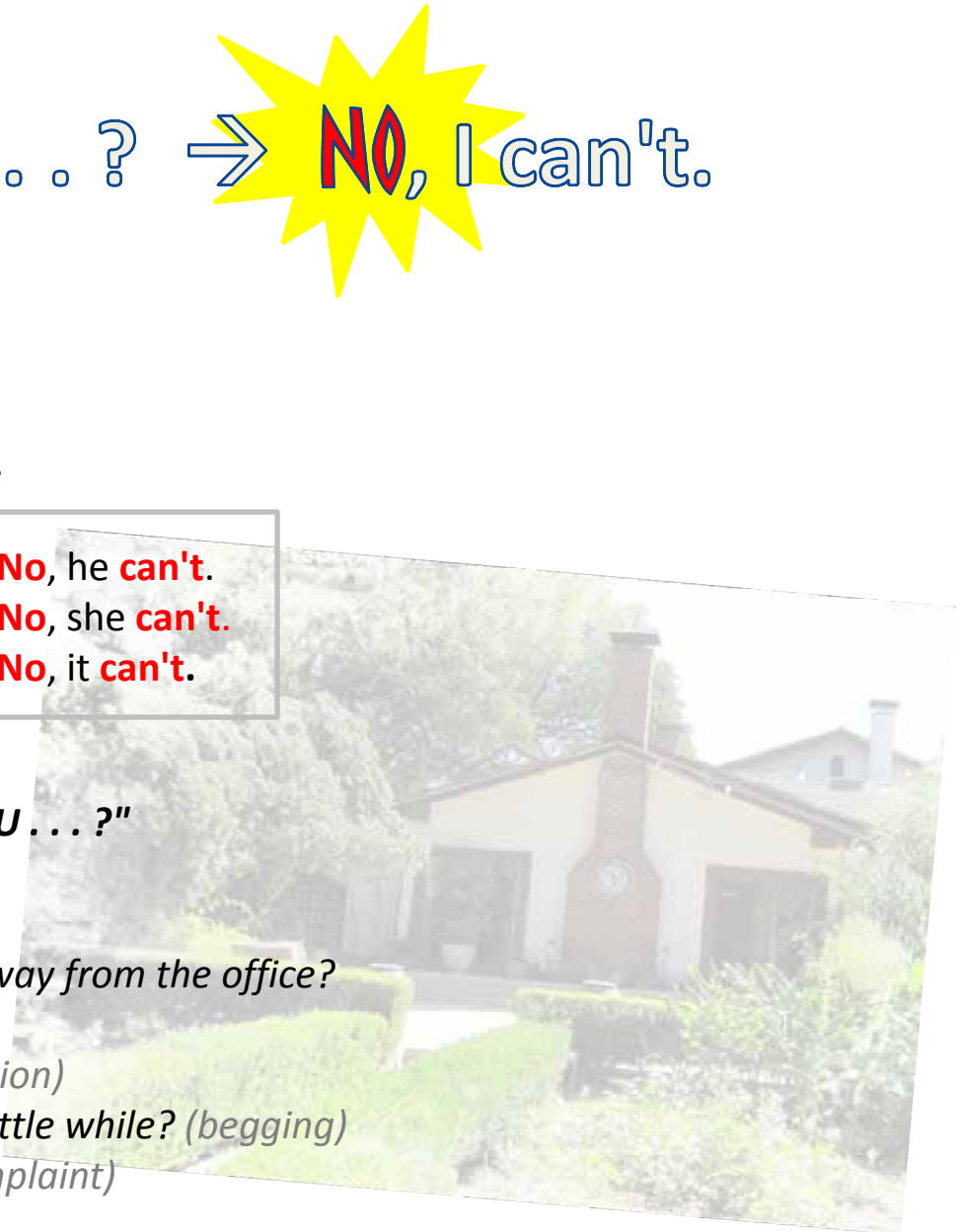
. . . *do me a big favor?*

. . . *answer my phone while I'm away from the office?*

Can't you *do it this way? (suggestion)*

Can't you *watch the house for a little while? (begging)*

Can't you *do anything right? (complaint)*



What do you think? → **NO**, thank you.

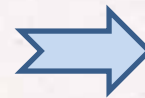
No, thank you. **No**, thanks. I'm **not** interested.

Sounds interesting, **but** I'll **pass** (on your offer or invitation).

I **don't** understand.



I don't know.



I don't think so.

I don't think that's true.

I **don't** care.
Whatever!

I **disagree** with you. I **disagree** with what you said.

I beg **to differ**. I beg **to disagree**. (*very formal*)

In **your** opinion. (*meaning: Nobody else believes what you said.*)

If you say so. (*meaning: You're wrong, but I'm tired of fighting.*)

That may be true, **but . . .**

I understand your point (or what you're saying), **but . . .**

Yes, but don't you think . . . ? (*meaning: I'm being extra polite, because I don't want to upset you.*)

How much is it? → It's **TOO** much.



It's expensive.

(It costs a lot.)

It's **very** expensive.

(It costs more than what I expected.)

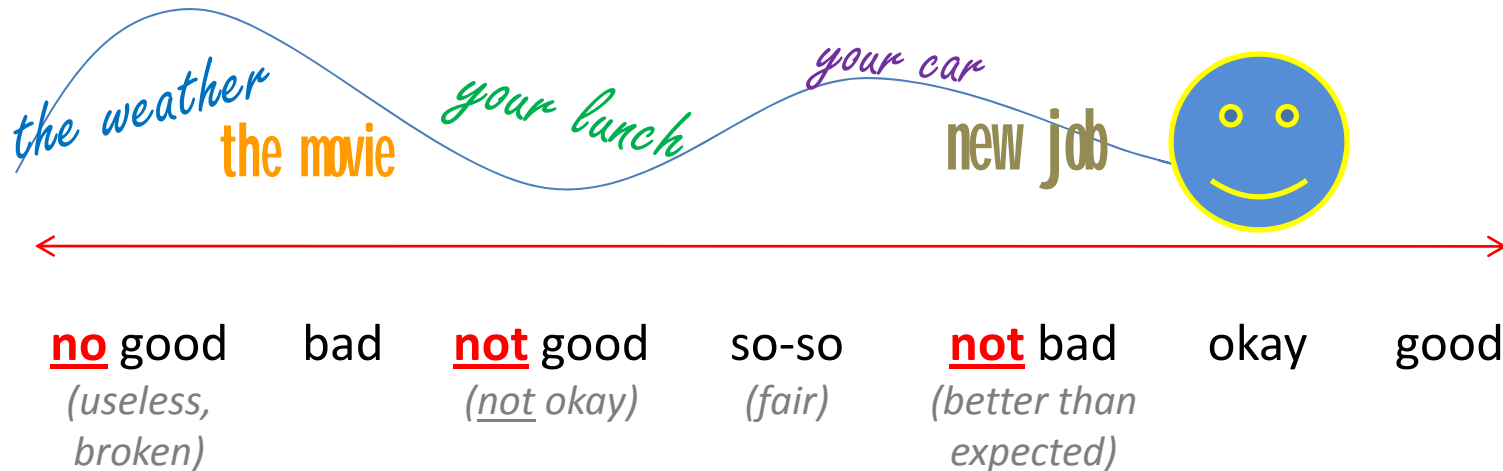
It's **so** expensive.

(Wow! It costs a lot more than what I expected.)

It's **too** expensive.

(I'm not buying it. I don't have enough money.)

How good or **bad** is it?



Could you . . . ? Sorry, I'm **BUSY**.

1. LET ME THINK ABOUT IT

Let me check . . . my schedule/calendar/to-do list, . . . and I'll let you know.
with my spouse/boss/assistant,

2. I'M BUSY

I'm sorry, **but . . .** I'm **busy**. It's a **bad** time. **But** thank you for thinking of me.

I **don't have** time (to do that). **Maybe** next time.

I **can't go**. I'm afraid I **can't make it**. ("can't go" = "can't make it")

I have to get going. I'm in a hurry.

NEVER AGAIN! (meaning: It was a horrible experience the last time.)

3. BROKEN RECORD*

No, I **can't**. No, I **can't**. No, I **can't**. You could be right, **but** I **can't** do it.

No, I **won't**. No, I **won't**. No, I **won't**. That may be true, **but** I **won't** do it.

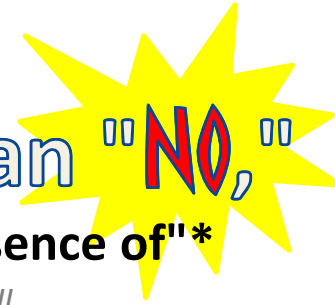
**"Broken Record involves speaking as if you were a broken record, saying what you want to say over and over again until the manipulator realizes that manipulation gets him or her nowhere in dealing with you."*

– Manuel J. Smith, Ph.D., Yes, I Can Say No: A Parent's Guide to Assertiveness Training for Children, 1986, p. 64

Parts of Words That Mean "NO,"

"against," "the opposite of," or "the absence of"*

**Some have other unrelated meanings as well.*



PREFIX or SUFFIX	EXAMPLES
ant(i)- <i>/,æn-tɪ, -ti:, -taɪ/</i>	ant acid for your stomach, anti bacterial soap, anti virus software, anti war protesters
dis-	dis agree <i>with</i> you, dis honest <i>with</i> you, dis loyal <i>to</i> you
il-	il legal, il literate, il logical (<i>words starting with "l"</i>)
im-	im mature, im polite <i>to</i> you, im possible <i>for</i> you (<i>words starting with bilabial consonants "p," "b," or "m"</i>)
in-	in complete homework, in correct answer, in dependent voter
ir-	ir regular, ir resistible, ir responsible (<i>words starting with "r"</i>)
non-	non fat milk, non fiction book, non profit organization
un-	un do, un true story, un usual gift
-less	child less couple, home less veteran, time less love

Just Say "NO"

- To **correct** mistakes,
- To **protect** your time and energy,
- For your self-respect and self-worth,
- And for your right to privacy.

When you say "NO,"
you're saying "YES"
to what's important to you.