

NEGATIVES

SKILL 7: LISTEN FOR NEGATIVE EXPRESSIONS

Negative expressions are very common in the short dialogues, and the most common kind of correct response to a negative statement is a positive statement containing a word with an opposite meaning.

Example from the Paper and Computer TOEFL® Tests  

On the recording, you hear:

- (man) *How did they get to their grandmother's house in Maine in only five hours?*
 (woman) *They didn't drive slowly on the trip to Maine.*
 (narrator) *What does the woman say about the trip?*

In your test book or on the computer screen, you read:

- (A) They drove rather quickly.
 (B) They couldn't have driven more slowly.
 (C) They wanted to travel slowly to Maine.
 (D) They didn't drive to Maine.

The correct answer is answer (A). If they *didn't* drive *slowly* to Maine, this means that they drove rather *quickly*. Notice that the correct answer uses *quickly*, the opposite of *slowly*. The answers that use *slowly* are not correct.

The following chart outlines the types of negative expressions that you should be careful of:

| TYPES OF NEGATIVE EXPRESSIONS | | |
|--|--|--|
| Expression | Example | Correct Answer |
| Regular negative: <i>not</i> or <i>n't</i> | Tom is <i>not sad</i> about the results. | <i>not sad = happy</i> |
| Other negatives: <i>nobody, none, nothing, never</i> | <i>Nobody</i> arrived <i>on time</i> . Sal <i>never</i> works <i>hard</i> . | <i>nobody ... on time = late</i> <i>never works hard = lazy</i> |
| Negative prefixes: <i>un-, in-, dis-</i> | The patient was <i>insane</i> . | <i>insane = not sane = crazy</i> |

EXERCISE 7: In this exercise, underline the negative in the last line of each short dialogue. Then read the question and choose the best answer to that question. Remember that the best answer is one that uses an opposite meaning.

1. (man) *I can't seem to get the door unlocked.*
 (woman) *That isn't the right key for the door.*
 (narrator) *What does the woman mean?*
- (A) The key in the drawer is on the right.
 (B) The man should write the message on the door.
 (C) The man has the wrong key.
 (D) The right key isn't in the drawer.

2. (man) *Were you pleased with last week's convention?*
 (woman) *Nothing went as planned.*
 (narrator) *What does the woman mean?*
- (A) The convention was disorganized.
 (B) She didn't plan to attend the convention.
 (C) She planned the convention last week.
 (D) She wasn't pleased with the last week of the convention.
3. (woman) *Are you planning to go to college next year?*
 (man) *I'm really unsure about the idea.*
 (narrator) *What does the man mean?*
- (A) He definitely wants to go to college.
 (B) He is certain about his plans.
 (C) He's hesitant about attending college.
 (D) His idea is to go to college.

TOEFL EXERCISE 7: In this exercise, listen carefully to each short dialogue and question on the recording, and then choose the best answer to the question. You should be particularly careful of negative expressions.



NOW BEGIN THE RECORDING AT TOEFL EXERCISE 7.

1. (A) She is very busy.
 (B) She has lots of free time.
 (C) It is not necessary to take out the trash.
 (D) She will do it if she has time.
2. (A) The interview is very important.
 (B) He is worried about the interview.
 (C) What he's wearing to the interview is important.
 (D) He is not concerned about the interview.
3. (A) He has almost all the notes.
 (B) His attendance was perfect.
 (C) He went to all the lectures but one.
 (D) He missed more than one psychology class.
4. (A) They passed the library at 6:00.
 (B) The library opens at 6:00 in the summer.
 (C) The library closes at 6:00.
 (D) You can't check out more than six books in the summer.
5. (A) Water the plants once a day.
 (B) Give the plants no more water.
 (C) Water the plants often while the man is gone.
 (D) Give the plants a limited amount of water.
6. (A) The service satisfied her.
 (B) The food was worse than the service.
 (C) She thought the service was bad.
 (D) Neither the food nor the service was satisfying.
7. (A) He told his kids to leave.
 (B) He seriously wanted the woman to go.
 (C) He was joking when he told the woman to leave.
 (D) He left with the woman.
8. (A) The project will take all their effort.
 (B) They have no other work to do.
 (C) It's impossible to finish.
 (D) They aren't even close to finishing the project.
9. (A) She doesn't mind an hour more.
 (B) She'd rather stay more than an hour.
 (C) It's better to stay than go.
 (D) She prefers to leave.
10. (A) The service at the hotel wasn't too good.
 (B) This hotel gave excellent service.
 (C) The service at the hotel could have been improved.
 (D) This hotel's service was the same as the service at other hotels.