

Kein is Used in a Sentence When:

- The noun to be negated has an indefinite article.

Ich will einen Apfel essen. Ich will keinen Apfel essen.

The word *kein* is in fact *k + ein* and is positioned where the indefinite article would be.

- the noun has no article.

Ich habe Zeit dafür. Ich habe keine Zeit dafür. (I don't have time for that.)

Nicht is Used in a Sentence When:

The noun to be negated has a definite article.

Er liest das Buch. Er liest das Buch nicht. (He is not reading the book.)

- The noun to be negated has a possessive pronoun.

Er liebt seine Freundin. Er liebt seine Freundin nicht.

- The verb is to be negated.

Ich will schlafen. Ich will nicht schlafen.

- An adverb/adverbial phrase is to be negated.

Sie rennt schnell. Sie rennt nicht schnell.

- An adjective is used with the verb *sein*.

Das Kind ist klein. Das Kind ist nicht klein.

nicht will usually come before:

- a verb prefix in a sentence containing a separable verb.
- an infinitive or infinitives that is part of a verbal combination.
- adverbs of time that cannot be organized chronologically
- all other adverbs
- verbs
- separable verb prefix
- verb infinitives
- adjectives
- prepositional phrases

nicht usually goes after:

- a precise adverb of time (heute, gestern, morgen, etc.) that can be organized chronologically