

13 Negatives

The most commonly used negatives are **nicht** and **kein** (13.1–3); for other negation words see 13.4.

13.1 Nicht

■ **13.1.1 Nicht** is generally used to negate whole clauses. Its position in the clause is then as follows.

- It follows objects and adverbs:

Ich verkaufe dir das Buch *I won't sell you the book.*
nicht.

Der Briefträger kommt *The postman doesn't come*
heute **nicht.** *today.*

Exception: it precedes adverbs of manner:

Das Stück gefiel mir **nicht** *I didn't like this play very*
besonders. *much.*

- In clauses with a second verb element at the end, **nicht** precedes that element. This occurs, for example, with compound tenses, modal verbs and separable verbs:

Wir haben die Tür **nicht** *We didn't open the door.*
geöffnet.

Sie möchte ihn jetzt *She doesn't want to see him*
nicht sehen. *now.*

Ruf sie **nicht an!** *Don't phone her.*

- **Nicht** precedes all other elements in the clause, including prepositional phrases and genitive objects:

Geh **nicht in die Küche!** *Don't go into the kitchen.*

Er wurde **nicht des** *He was not accused of*
Mordes angeklagt. *murder.*

- **13.1.2** Alternatively, **nicht** may be used to negate a particular element in the clause. It then precedes that element:

Sie kommen **nicht**
morgen früh.

Wir stellen **nicht ihn** ein,
sondern jemand anderen.

They are not coming tomorrow
morning (but another time).

We won't employ him but
someone else.

Nicht ... sondern (*not ... but*) is a common combination.

13.2 Kein

Kein (*not a, not any or no*) is the negative form of the indefinite article **ein**. It declines like **ein** and the possessive adjectives (see 5.1.3 and 14.3.2).

- **13.2.1 Kein** is the usual negation for nouns and is placed before the noun (and its adjective, if any):

Das ist **kein** guter Wein. *That's not a good wine.*

Eva möchte **keine** Chips. *Eva doesn't want any crisps.*

- **13.2.2 Kein** negates verb + noun combinations, such as:

Angst/Durst/Hunger haben *to be afraid/thirsty/hungry*

Geld haben *to have money*

Atem holen *to take a breath*

Freude haben an *to take pleasure in*

sich Mühe geben *to make an effort*

Sie hat **keine** Angst. *She's not afraid.*

Er hat **keinen** Hunger. *He's not hungry.*

- **13.2.3** It is also used in some idiomatic expressions:

Das Auto hat **keine** *The car cost less than 1000*
1000 € gekostet. *euros.*

Das ist **noch keine fünf** *That was less than five*
Minuten her. *minutes ago.*

Es ist **noch keine sechs** *It's not six o'clock yet.*
Uhr.

Er ist **kein Kind mehr.** *He's no longer a child.*