

57. Other points about negatives

1 Negating nouns, phrases

1.1 *Pas* is most commonly used where there is no verb:

- Il n'y a plus de riz - **Pas** de problème
- *We've run out of rice - No problem*
- Marie est de retour? - **Pas** encore
- *Is Marie back? - Not yet*
- Pierre adore les anchois. **Pas** moi!
- *Pierre adores anchovies. I don't!*

1.2 *Non* is used when negating a whole preceding sentence:

- Tu as pris l'appareil-photo? - **Non**
- *Did you bring the camera? - No (I didn't)*

1.3 Both *non* and *pas* are used where a negative contrasts with a positive. Here *non pas* can also be used to create emphasis:

La bière anglaise se boit fraîche mais **pas** / **non** glacée
English beer is drunk cool but not chilled
Je lui ai dit de venir mercredi, **non pas** jeudi!
*I told him / her to come on Wednesday, **not** on Thursday!*

2 *Ne ... que*

The *que* is placed before the noun to which the sense of the word *only* refers:

Je **ne** nettoie la cuisine **que** le mardi
I only clean the kitchen on Tuesdays
Je **ne** nettoie **que** la cuisine le mardi
On Tuesdays I only clean the kitchen

Ne ... que can also be applied to a subject, but in this case it must be introduced by *il y a*:

Il n'y a que moi qui nettoie la cuisine le mardi
Only I clean the kitchen on Tuesdays

Ne ... que can also be applied to a verb, but only indirectly by using the construction *ne faire que*:

Le mardi je **ne fais que** ranger la cuisine, je ne la nettoie pas
On Tuesdays I only tidy the kitchen, I don't clean it

3 *Ne* with no negative meaning

Sometimes *ne* is used in French without having the force of a negative, (this is sometimes called the **expletive ne**). It is used in the following circumstances:

3.1 With the conjunctions *avant que*, *à moins que*, *de crainte que*, *de peur que*:

Je serai partie avant que tu **ne** reviennes
I will have left before you come back

3.2 With the verb constructions *craindre que*, *avoir peur que*, *redouter que*, *éviter que*, *empêcher que*:

Je crains qu'il **ne** soit trop tard pour l'empêcher

I fear it is too late to stop him / her / it

3.3 Optionally, in comparative phrases involving *plus que* or *moins que* plus a verb:

Il est moins grand que je **ne** le pensais

He is smaller than I thought