Grammar Explanation

Avoiding double negatives

- Use only one negative in a clause. Using more than one negative in a single sentence is incorrect.

  o Incorrect: Joe will not get no parole before serving at least ten years.
  o Corrected: Joe will not get parole before serving at least ten years.

- Pronouns such as nobody, no one, none, nothing are negative. Do not use them with no or not.

  o Incorrect: The defendant has not done nothing illegal.
  o Corrected: The defendant has not done anything illegal.

- Never and neither have negative meanings. Do not use them with no or not.

  o Incorrect: Mr. Myers doesn’t agree with the proposal neither.
  o Corrected: Mr. Myers doesn’t agree with the proposal either.

- Words such as barely, scarcely, hardly are considered negative. Do not use them with no or not.

  o Incorrect: The politicians don’t hardly understand what caused the sudden shift in public opinion.
  o Corrected: The politicians hardly understand what caused the sudden shift in public opinion.

Excerpted from: Editing Exercises: Exercise 2