

Transferred Negation

Negative Raising (Shifted or Transferred Negation)

When we express negative ideas with verbs like *think*, *believe*, etc., we prefer to make the first verb negative instead of the second. We shift or transfer the negative from the second verb to the first. Take, for example, the following sentence:

*I think John **isn't** coming to the party.*

Tip: If you put a “not” in a wrong place in your sentence, it may sound awkward and the message is not clear.

Although this sentence is correct, it sounds strange to native speakers. We prefer to move (shift or transfer) the negative to the preceding verb.

*I **don't think** John is coming to the party.*

Other verbs used like this include: *expect*, *seem*, *suppose*, and *want*.

Study the following examples:

We usually say:	We do NOT usually say:
I don't think he's coming.	I think he's not coming.
I don't believe he's coming.	I believe he's not coming.
I don't suppose he's coming.	I suppose he's not coming.
I don't want him to come.	I want him not to come.
I don't expect him to come.	I expect him not to come.
He doesn't seem to like it.	He seems not to like it.

Transferred Negation

More Examples:

- I think this proposal is **not** considerate for both parties. INCORRECT
- I **don't** think this proposal is considerate for both parties. CORRECT
- I believe he **can't** make it there on time for the meeting. INCORRECT
- I **don't** believe he can make it there on time for the meeting. CORRECT
- It seems that they **don't** know what to do with the remaining budget. INCORRECT
- It **doesn't** seem that they know what to do with the remaining budget. CORRECT

Exceptions to negative raising

1. Surprise is often expressed without shifting the negative¹.

- I thought you **wouldn't** get here on time!
- I thought you'd **never** get here on time!
- I thought you **weren't** coming!

2. Negative raising is not used with *hope*²:

- I hope he **doesn't** come.

3. Negative raising is preferred in informal style with verbs that are followed by an infinitive³:

- He **doesn't** seem to understand.
- I **don't** expect to be back before Monday.
- I **don't** want to miss the concert tonight.
- I **never** intend to come back here.