

# Q and A of the Week 你问我答

## No, not and not to 教你说“不”



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**Rob:** Hello, I'm Rob. Welcome to another edition of Question and Answer of the Week. Joining me in the studio today is Feifei – hi Feifei!

**Feifei:** 不, 不要, 不是...

**Rob:** Err, Feifei, could you say hello please?

**Feifei:** No... no... no..

**Rob:** That's a bit rude.

**Feifei:** Oh sorry, I was just thinking to myself about the word 'no'.

**Rob:** Fascinating!

**Feifei:** Yes, I'm trying to work out how to help one of our listeners who sent us a question to answer.

**Rob:** Oh yes?

**Feifei:** It's from Libbin Peng who says: *I always confuse the grammatical use for words 'no, not & not to'. Could you please explain how to use them? Could you also give me some simple examples please? Thanks.*

**Rob:** Thanks Libbin. There's no question too big or too small that we can't answer.

**Feifei:** Libbin 的问题是怎么区分单词 no 不, not 不是、没有, 还有 not to 不要。I guess these words are not all the same?

**Rob:** No. Let's start with that word, 'no'. Firstly, if you respond to a question negatively then that's when you can say no. For example:

### **Example**

*Can I have a pay rise?*  
*No!*

**Feifei:** 在上面这个例子里, no 的意思就是不、不行。It's a very negative word.

**Rob:** Yes! No can also be used as a determiner to express quantity. It's used in front of singular and plural nouns to mean 'not any', but we say 'no' to give it more negative effect. So instead of:

### Example

*He must lead a lonely life: he doesn't have a wife and he doesn't have any children.*

**Rob:** We say...

### Example

*He must lead a lonely life in that village: he has no wife and no children.*

**Feifei:** 这里用单词 no 代替 not any, 是为了加重语气, 强调什么都没有。

**Rob:** Also with countable nouns, 'no' is normally followed by plural forms, like this:

### Examples

*No students got an A grade in their exams this year.*

*No trains are running today because of the snow.*

**Feifei:** No 后面可以连接名词单数或复数, 其中可数名词多取复数形式。And Rob, we see the word 'no' used in lots of signs?

**Rob:** Yes, like 'no smoking', 'no entry' and 'no eating in the studio' – Feifei could you put that sandwich away please?

**Feifei:** No! Well, not unless we talk about the word 'not'.

**Rob:** OK, well 'not' is used to make a clause or sentence negative. Used before a verb, it makes it negative, a bit like this:

### Example

*Can we go home please? I'm really not enjoying this film.*

**Rob:** It can also be used before an adjective:

### Example

*not beautiful*

**Feifei:** 这里 not 用来否定后面的形容词。

**Rob:** Or a noun phrase.

### **Examples:**

*not the best*

*not my fault*

**Feifei:** 这里 not 用来否定后面的名词短语。

**Rob:** Or a prepositional phrase.

### **Example**

*not in here*

**Feifei:** Not 否定后面的介词短语。

**Rob:** Or even an adverb.

### **Example**

*not quickly*

**Feifei:** Not 还可以用来否定后面的副词。上面所举的所有例子都是用 not 来否定一个句子或从句。It's not a very positive word is it?

**Rob:** It's not. And remember the word not often gets contracted into the previous auxiliary verb. For example, 'could not' becomes 'couldn't', and 'cannot' becomes 'can't'.

### **Example**

*When I phoned my friend I couldn't get a reply.*

**Feifei:** 单词 not 和助动词连用的时候通常会被缩写，如上面的例子 could not 缩写成 couldn't. Finally Rob, we've got to talk about 'not to' 不要。

**Rob:** This is often used in a negative instruction or command and is another way of saying you must not do something. For example:

### **Examples**

*You are not to walk on the motorway at any time.*

*We were told not to eat the pork because it hadn't been cooked.*

**Feifei:** 上面两个例子讲的都是用 not to 来发出指令，强调不要做什么事情。当然，not to 也是动词不定式的否定形式。

## **Example**

*I decided to eat the two-week-old bread.*

*I decided not to eat the two-week old bread.*

**Rob:** So Feifei, are we clearer about these negative words?

**Feifei:** Much clearer Rob and hopefully we helped Libbin too.

**Rob:** And what should other people do if there's something about the English language they do not understand? Give up?

**Feifei:** No Rob! 如果你在英语学习中遇到难题，请在微博上给我们留言，或发邮件到 [questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk](mailto:questions.chinaelt@bbc.co.uk). 下次再会。

**Rob:** Bye bye!