

# Either, neither, both

## Introduction



"We have **both** red and white wine - which would you like?" "Neither, thanks. I'd prefer a beer if you have any."

## Definition

**Either**, **neither** and **both** are quantifiers which we use to talk about two things or people.

## Construction

There are lots of different structures. Here are some of them:

<b>Either</b>	+ singular noun	<b>Either</b> day is OK for me.
	without a noun	<b>Either</b> is OK for me.
	+ two singular nouns	<b>Either</b> Monday <u>or</u> Wednesday is OK for me.
	+ of + plural noun	<b>Either</b> of those days is OK for me.
<b>Neither</b>	+ singular noun	<b>Neither</b> day is OK for me.
	without a noun	<b>Neither</b> is OK for me.
	+ two singular nouns	<b>Neither</b> Monday <u>nor</u> Wednesday is OK for me.
	+ of + plural noun	<b>Neither</b> of those days is OK for me.

<b>Both</b>	+ plural noun	<b>Both</b> days are OK for me.
	without a noun	<b>Both</b> are OK for me.
	+ two singular nouns	<b>Both</b> Monday <u>and</u> Wednesday are OK for me.
	+ of + plural noun	<b>Both</b> of those days are OK for me.
	after a noun	Those days are <b>both</b> OK for me.

**Note that** with 'of', we need to use 'the', a **demonstrative**, a **possessive adjective** or a **pronoun**.

Are **either** of the candidates suitable?

I've seen **both** of these films.

**Neither** of my children likes vegetables.

**Neither** of them likes vegetables

We can use **both** in this way without 'of' but it is necessary for **either** and **neither**:

**Both** (of) her parents are teachers. ✓

**Neither** of her parents are teachers. ✓

Are **either** of her parents teachers? ✗

**Neither** her parents are teachers. ✗

## Uses

Use	Examples
To talk about two possibilities or choices	We can have the meeting on <b>either</b> day - I don't mind.  I can offer you <b>either</b> tea or coffee.  <b>Either</b> we invite them here <u>or</u> we can meet in a restaurant.
To ask two people a question	Do <b>either</b> of you speak German?

To respond to or add information to a negative statement	"I don't like coffee." "Neither do I."/"I don't either."  I'm not going to the meeting and <b>neither</b> is Kerry. I'm not going to the meeting and Kerry isn't <b>either</b> .
To emphasise a similarity between two things or people	They <b>both</b> like coffee.  <b>Neither</b> of them likes coffee.  I don't think <b>either</b> of them likes coffee.
To talk about possible consequences	<b>Either</b> we improve our performance <u>or</u> we'll lose even more clients.
To emphasise two related points	He didn't work hard enough. <b>Neither</b> was he ever on time.
To emphasise that not only one but two things or people are involved  <b>Note that</b> we use an affirmative verb with ' <b>neither...nor</b> ' and ' <b>both...and</b> ' and a negative verb with ' <b>either...or</b> '	He confirmed <b>neither</b> the date <u>nor</u> the time of the meeting. = He didn't confirm <b>either</b> the date <u>or</u> the time of the meeting.  He confirmed <b>both</b> the date <u>and</u> the time of the meeting.

## Subject verb agreement

	Singular	Plural
both	✗	<b>Both</b> are big enough.
either	<b>Either</b> is big enough.	[see below]
neither	<b>Neither</b> is big enough.	[see below]

'either of' 'neither of'	<b>Either</b> of them is big enough. <b>Neither</b> of them is big enough.	<b>Either</b> of them are big enough. <b>Neither</b> of them are big enough.
-----------------------------	---	---

**Note that**

- 1. With **either** and **neither** we can use a singular or plural verb. In conversation, both are acceptable:

"Have **either** of you seen my keys?"

but a singular verb is preferred in formal written English:

**Neither** of our sales targets has been reached.

- 2. When there is more than one noun, the choice of verb depends on whether the first or second person or thing mentioned is singular or plural:

When the second noun is singular - singular verb preferred but plural verb acceptable in conversation.	<b>Either</b> the sales manager or the director is going to attend the conference.
When the second noun is plural - plural verb.	<b>Either</b> the director or the sales managers are going to attend the conference.
When the second noun is singular but the first is plural - a singular or plural verb.	<b>Either</b> the sales managers or the director <u>is/are</u> going to attend the conference.

## Not only nouns

As well as nouns, we can use **either**, **neither** or **both** to talk about other things, including adjectives and actions:

- This car is available in **either** red or blue.
- We can **either** drive or go by train.
- She's **neither** helpful nor polite.
- She can **both** sing and dance.

## Correlative conjunctions

We use '**either...or...**'; '**neither...nor...**' and '**both...and...**' to include two people or things in a sentence or clause:

She has **either** a brother or a sister - I can't remember.

She has **neither** a brother nor a sister.

She has **both** a brother and a sister.

These structures can also be used with verbs:

I'll **either** reply to my emails this afternoon or do some research; I don't have time for **both**.

She **neither** smokes nor drinks.

She **both** smokes and drinks.

## Examples



You can ask **either** Maria or George for help - they're **both** experts.



**Either** you work harder in future or you'll fail your exams.



"I'm not busy on Friday." "I'm not **either**, so let's meet then."



"I'm not happy with this situation. **Neither** am I prepared to put up with it any longer."

"Well, we can **either** send a strong letter or I can call them again. Which do you suggest?"



Do **either** of you remember taking this turning here?



**Both** my son and my daughter are driving me mad.



I think **either** Patty or Estelle is going to win.



I don't know why I took this job - the work is **neither** interesting nor challenging.



"Would you like tea or coffee?" "I don't mind - **either** is fine."

"Milk? Sugar?" "**Neither**, thanks."

From:

<https://tools.e-exercises.com/> - Ressources pour les apprenants

Permanent link:

[https://tools.e-exercises.com/doku.php?id=en:grammar:quantifiers:either\\_neither\\_both&rev=1475072249](https://tools.e-exercises.com/doku.php?id=en:grammar:quantifiers:either_neither_both&rev=1475072249)

Last update: **2023/02/14 14:21**

