

# Something, anything, everything, nothing etc: further information

## 'No one' etc. or 'not anyone' etc?

These have the same meaning but 'not' + **anyone**, **anybody**, **anything** and **anywhere** are more commonly used. **No one**, **nobody**, **nothing** and **nowhere** are considered more emphatic:

| Neutral  | Emphatic                                       |
|--|--|
| There isn't <b>anything</b> I can do to help.        | There's <b>nothing</b> I can do to help.       |
| I don't know <b>anyone</b> in that company.          | I know <b>no one</b> in that company.          |
| I haven't been <b>anywhere</b> interesting recently. | I've been <b>nowhere</b> interesting recently. |

## With 'they' and 'them'

Although the pronouns take singular verbs, we sometimes use 'they', 'them', 'their' and 'theirs' rather than 'he', 'she', 'him', 'her', 'his', and 'hers' with those relating to people. For example:

**Someone** gave me their ticket so I can go to the concert.

If **anyone** understands this, can they explain it to me, please?

**Everyone** needs to understand their responsibilities.

**No one** has finished writing theirs yet.

We often do this when we don't want to specify a gender. It is much better than using 'he or she' or 's/he', for example.

## Negative subjects

'Not **anyone**' etc. isn't usually used at the beginning of a sentence or **clause**:

Not anyone has to work at weekends. ❌

Not anything was provided. ❌

We looked for a hotel but not anywhere in the city was suitable. ❌

Instead, we use **no one** or **nothing** or **nowhere**:

**No one** has to work at weekends.

**Nothing** was provided.

We looked for a hotel but **nowhere** in the city was suitable.

However, we can use 'not **everyone**'.

Not **everyone** is happy about the new rules.

I tried to explain that not **everything** about this job is easy.

## 'Anyone' etc. in affirmative sentences

The pronouns beginning with 'any' can be used in affirmative sentences which include a word with a negative or restrictive meaning:

We rarely invite **anyone** here in the winter - the roads are too dangerous.

It's unlikely that we'll receive **anything** before the end of the week.

We failed to find **anywhere** that was suitable for the conference.

We also use it in clauses beginning with 'before':

Let's deal with it now before **anyone** complains.

Before buying **anything** for the new office, we should decide exactly what we need.

See also 'hardly' in 'Intensifiers'.

## 'Someone' etc. in negative sentences

We do not usually use **someone** etc. in negative sentences:

I don't know **someone** there. ❌

I don't know **anyone** there. ✅

I know **no one** there. ✅

However, it is possible if, for example, the person is unknown or we avoid naming the person or we are being ironic:

**Someone** didn't remember to lock the door last night.

Or with 'something':

**Something** isn't right here.

I didn't do **something** wrong.

## Intensifiers

We use intensifiers to give extra information. Here are some examples:

|  | No one, nothing, nowhere   | Anyone, anything, anywhere  | Everyone, everything, everywhere  |
|--|--|---|---|
| 'almost',<br>'virtually'   | I saw <u>almost</u> <b>no one</b> I know.  | She enjoys talking to <u>virtually</u> <b>anyone</b> .                    | I told <u>virtually</u> <b>everyone</b> .   |
| With <u>anyone</u> etc.,<br>The meaning is 'it doesn't matter who/which/where' | There's <u>virtually</u> <b>nothing</b> in this report that's useful.<br><br>There's <u>almost</u> <b>nowhere</b> I wouldn't go for a holiday. | I don't mind where we eat - I'll be happy <u>almost</u> <b>anywhere</b> . | We ate <u>almost</u> <b>everything</b> .<br><br>I've got contacts <u>virtually</u> <b>everywhere</b> in Eastern Europe. |

|              |  |  |  |
|--------------|--|--|--|
| 'nearly'     | ×  | ×  | <b>Nearly everyone</b> replied to the invitation.<br><br>I looked <u>nearly</u> <b>everywhere</b> for my keys. |
| 'hardly'     | ×  | <b>Hardly anyone</b> I know speaks fluent French.<br><br>It's so boring in this town - there's <u>hardly</u> <b>anything</b> to do in the evenings.<br><br>There's <u>hardly</u> <b>anywhere</b> in this building where we can talk privately. | ×  |
| 'absolutely' | I knew <u>absolutely</u> <b>no one</b> at the seminar. | I'm so hungry; I could eat <u>absolutely</u> <b>anything</b> right now.  | I looked <u>absolutely</u> <b>everywhere</b> for my keys but couldn't find them.                               |

## Examples



Have you seen my keys? I can't find them **anywhere**.



Not **everybody** takes a suitcase with them on the plane - some people just have hand luggage.



There's absolutely **nowhere** I'd rather be right now!

For more information, see **some**, **any**, **no** and **every**.

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