

LESSON NOTES

Learn Cantonese in Three Minutes #13 Negative Forms

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GRAMMAR

The focus of this lesson is negative forms in Cantonese

Topic 1: How to write negative sentences

Sentence from the lesson:

我唔係美國人

ngo5 m4 hai6 mei5 gwok3 jan4

"I'm not American"

1. Let's look at these two negative sentences:

我唔係美國人 *ngo5 m4 hai6 mei5 gwok3 jan4* "I'm not American"

佢唔喺香港 *keoi5 m4 hai2 hoeng1 gong2* "She's not in Hong Kong"

Did you catch any similar word in these two sentences?

唔 *m4* is the special word used to make a verb negative in Cantonese.

2. So let's have a look at the way to switch from affirmative to negative.

First with the verb 係 *hai6*. If your friend was American, he would say 我係美國人 *ngo5 hai6 mei5 gwok3 jan4*, "I am American." But if he is not, he'd say 我唔係美國人 *ngo5 m4 hai6 mei5 gwok3 jan4*.

So basically, you just have to put the word 唔 *m4* before the verb.

3. Now let's look at an example with the verb 喺 *hai2*, "to be (at a location)": "She is in Hong Kong" is 佢喺香港 *keoi5 hai2 hoeng1 gong2*, and "She is not in Hong Kong" is 佢唔喺香港 *keoi5 m4 hai2 hoeng1 gong2*.
4. So now, how would you say "I don't eat meat" ? For reference, "I eat meat" is 我食肉 *ngo5 sik6 juk6*. So, just put 唔 *m4* in front of the verb "to eat" 食 *sik6*, and you'll get 我唔食肉 *ngo5 m4 sik6 juk6*.

Language Tip!

If you want to answer negatively but without being too direct, you can add 係好 *hai6 hou2* after the 唔 *m4*. This means "I don't really...."

So if you want to say "I don't really eat meat," it will be 我唔係好食肉 *ngo5 m4 hai6 hou2 sik6 juk6*.