

Either and Neither

These two simple words are commonly used in English and have THREE main functions. Do you know one, two, or all the functions? Do you know how they work? Let's see together.

1. Negative Statements

When someone expresses a negative statement and we want to indicate that the same or similar situation applies to another person, we can use these structures:

- **Either**

Grammar: Pronoun + Auxiliary/Modal Verb + Either

Examples:

Jennifer hasn't eaten her sandwich. James hasn't either.

They shouldn't complain. We shouldn't either.

Stephanie was not worried at all. Her husband wasn't either.

- **Neither**

Grammar: Neither (nor) + Auxiliary/Modal Verb + Pronoun

Examples:

Jennifer hasn't eaten her sandwich. Neither has James.

They shouldn't complain. Neither should we.

Stephanie was not worried at all. Neither was her husband.

2. A Choice Between Two Possibilities

Either... or..., Neither... nor...

- **Either... or...**

It is used in a sentence in the affirmative sense when referring to a choice between two possibilities.

Example:

We can eat either now or after the show. It's up to you.

- **Neither... nor...**

It is used in a sentence in the negative sense when you want to say that two things are not true.

Example:

Neither my mother nor my father went to university.

- **Singular or Plural Verbs?**

When using this structure, the thing nearest the verb governs it.

Examples:

Either I or she drives the car.

Either she or I drive the car.

3. **Either And Neither As Determiners**

Determiners are words that come before nouns and specify something about their quantity, definiteness, or ownership.

- **Either**

Either is used in a sentence in the affirmative sense when referring to a choice between two possibilities.

Example:

Either dress fitted her. (There were two dresses and each of them fitted her.)

- **Neither**

Neither allows us to make a negative statement about two people or things at the same time.

Example:

Neither dress fitted her. (There were two dresses and not one of them fitted her.)

- **Singular or Plural?**

As determiners, 'either' and 'neither' go before singular nouns. However, We use 'either of' and 'neither of' before plural nouns and pronouns. What about verbs? 'Either' and 'neither' are followed by singular verbs. However, in case of 'either of' and 'neither of', in formal styles, we use 'either of' and 'neither of' with a singular verb. On the other hand, in informal speaking, people often use plural verbs.

Examples:

Either chocolate tastes sweet.

Neither woman was into him.

Either of the birthday cards was suitable. (formal)

Either of them were able to help me. (informal)