Negative questions are of two kinds: **contracted** and **uncontracted**. They have different word order. Note that uncontracted negative questions are usually formal.

**Contracted negative questions**

Form: auxiliary verb + n’t + subject

- Didn’t she come?
- Don’t you understand?
- Weren’t you surprised?

**Uncontracted negative questions**

Auxiliary verb + subject + not

- Did she not come?
- Do you not understand?
- Were you not surprised?

Non-auxiliary **have** and non-auxiliary **be** can begin negative questions.

- She hasn’t any friends to help her. (negative statement – formal GB)
- Hasn’t she any friends to help her? (contracted negative question)
- OR Doesn’t she have any friends to help her?

- She is not at home. (negative statement)
- Is she not at home? (Uncontracted negative question)
- Isn’t she at home? (Contracted negative question)

**Two meanings**

Negative questions can have two different kinds of meaning. For example, a negative question can ask for confirmation of a positive belief. In this case it expects the answer ‘yes’.

- Isn’t it true that she is going out with an old man? (I believe that she is going out with an old man. Now I am just asking for confirmation.)

A negative question can also ask for confirmation of a negative belief. In this case it expects the answer ‘no’.

- Aren’t they coming? (= Am I right in thinking that they aren’t coming?)

Note that the meaning of a negative question is usually clear from the context and situation.