

Ain't

Youtube: https://youtu.be/_WkJ9oyR9sM

Today's vocabulary is: *ain't*. *Ain't* is a very useful word to know because it is so common in everyday English conversation. It's so common. You can hear it all the time, and yet in my experience, many students of English don't know this word. At least that's been my experience. And I think this is because, even though this word is very common in conversational English, it's considered informal and so teachers don't teach this word in the classroom. But let me know what your experience has been. Did you learn this word? If so, where did you learn it? Did you learn it in the classroom?

Ain't is used to mean “not”. More specifically, it can be used instead of “*am not*”, “*is not*”, or “*are not*”.

For example:

“*I am not a doctor*”, can become “*I ain't a doctor*”.

“*He is not a teacher*” can become “*He ain't a teacher*”.

“*You aren't a policeman*” could become “*You ain't a policeman*” et cetera.

Now, notice that *ain't* does not inflect. For example: *I am not, you are not, he is not, they are not*, et cetera, becomes: *I ain't, you ain't, they ain't, he ain't*. It's always *ain't*. *Ain't* doesn't change.

Ain't can also be used instead of *has not* or *have not*.

For example:

“*I haven't got any money*”, can become “*I ain't got no money*”.

Or “*You haven't seen anything yet*,” can become “*You ain't seen nothing yet*.”

Somewhat less commonly, *ain't* can be used instead of *don't*, *doesn't* or *didn't*, but this isn't as common. Most commonly it's used instead of *am not*, *is not*, *are not*, *has not*, and *haven't*.

When I was at school, I was taught by teachers not to use *ain't*. The teachers told us that *ain't* isn't a word, and so we shouldn't use it.

When we were children, we used to say a rhyme or a chant: “*Ain't ain't a word, so I ain't going to say ain't anymore*”, which translated into standard English would be: “*ain't isn't a word so I'm not going to say ain't anymore*.” But as children we thought it was funny to use the word *ain't* in the same sentence saying that we weren't going to use *ain't*. We thought we were quite clever when we were children. It was usually said with a chant or a singsong type voice, for example: “*Ain't ain't a word so I ain't going to say ain't anymore*.” Or something like that.

But in fact, *ain't* is a word. In fact it's a very old word and is a perfectly fine word. It is in a lot of English songs and music. It's in a lot of English movies and TV, and it's even in a lot of very respected English literature, for example *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* also by Mark Twain. These are some of the most famous and some of the most well-respected works of American literature, and the characters in these

books use *ain't* all the time. So it is a word, and it is something that you will hear in conversation a lot and you will also hear it in English movies and TV shows and music.

However some people think that the word is associated with uneducated people or that it's low-class, and for that reason some parents or teachers will tell their children not to use it. In my opinion it's a perfectly fine word, but you should be aware that there are some situations where you can use it, and some situations where you shouldn't use it. It's informal, English, so you shouldn't use it in any formal situations. For example if you are writing a business letter, you shouldn't use *ain't* and if you are writing a report for your school, you shouldn't use *ain't* and if you are taking any kind of standardized English speaking test like the TOEIC or the TOEFL or the IELTS, you shouldn't use *ain't*. However if you're in conversation with your friends, it's perfectly fine to use this word in friendly conversation.

This word is very common in a lot of English music. A lot of famous songs use this word. In fact you may have already heard this word while listening to English pop songs. I'll give you the titles of some of the more famous songs that have this word, and it may be useful to find these songs on YouTube and listen to the-- just to get some idea of how common the word can be. For example "*Ain't no Sunshine*" or sometimes "*Ain't no Sunshine When She's Gone*" or "*Ain't Got No--I got Life*" or "*Ain't No Mountain High Enough*". I'll write the names of these songs in the description to this video down below so you can see the titles and search for these songs on YouTube. If you can find a copy of the song, it may be useful to listen to it, just to see how the word *ain't* is used in real songs.

One more thing about the word *ain't* is it's often used in what we call double negative sentences. So a double negative sentence could be something like: "*I don't have no money.*" So *don't* is a negative marker and *no* is a negative, so we have two negatives in this sentence. So we call it a double negative. Now, in formal English it is usually thought that the two negatives can cancel each other out. For example, "*I don't have no money*" would mean actually I do have some money. But in informal English, double negatives are often used for emphasis--to make the phrase stronger. So, for example, "*I ain't got no money*" means I don't have any money and it's a stronger way of saying it, or "*Ain't no sunshine when she's gone,*" means there isn't any sunshine when she's gone, and it's just a stronger form, or "*Ain't no mountain high enough,*" means there isn't any mountain high enough. Et cetera. So, be aware that quite often when you see *ain't* used in conversation or in sentences it may have two negative markers in the sentence, but that's often used in informal English to make the negative stronger.

So let me know in the comments what your experience has been learning *ain't* in schools, if you study English as a second language, and also if you would like some practice, try using *ain't* in a sentence in the comments below, and I can give you some feedback about how natural or unnatural the sentence sounds.