The Negative Imperative

The ordinary imperative is used to tell people what you want them to do, e.g. ‘Sit down!’; ‘Go away!’; or ‘Come here!’

The *Negative imperative* is used to tell people what you want them *not* to do, e.g. ‘Don’t do that!’; ‘Don’t stand there!’; or ‘Don’t daydream!’ It is also called a *prohibition.*

**Making the Negative Imperative:**

To tell *one person* what not to do:
- Use the command *noli*, ‘Don’t!’
- Add the infinitive, e.g. *noli tangere!* ‘Don’t touch!'

To tell *several people* what not to do:
- Use the command *nolite*, ‘Don’t!’
- Add the infinitive, e.g. *nolite tangere!* ‘Don’t touch!’

In fact, *noli* and *nolite* are the normal imperatives of the verb *nolo* – ‘I do not want’. So what this Roman is really saying is ‘Do not want to touch!’.

**Exercise 1:**

Translate the following sentences into good English. Say whether these commands are for one person (singular) or for more than one (plural) [20 marks].

a) *noli festinare!*
  f) *nolite spectare!*

b) *nolite ridere!*
  g) *noli emere!*

c) *noli dormiere!*
  h) *nolite amphoram portare!*

d) *nolite ire!*
  i) *noli Marcum necare!*

e) *noli manere!*
  j) *nolite hostes timere!*
Exercise 2:

Translate the following sentences into good Latin [20 marks].

a) Don’t run! (singular)  
b) Don’t sit! (plural)  
c) Don’t ask! (singular)  
d) Don’t throw! (singular)  
e) Don’t stop! (plural)  
f) Don’t drink! (plural)  
g) Don’t move! (singular)  
h) Don’t drag! (plural)  
i) Don’t look! (singular)  
j) Don’t work! (plural)

bibo, bibere, bibi, bibitum - drink  
cesso, cessare, cessavi, cessatum - stop  
curro, currere, cucurri, currum - run  
iacio, iacere, icti, iactum - throw  
laboro, laborare, laboravi, laboratum - work  
moveo, movere, movi, motum - move  
rogo, rogare, rogavi, rogatum - ask  
sedeo, sedere, sedi, sessum - sit  
traho, trahere, traxi, tractum - drag  
video, videre, visi, visum - look

Exercise 3:

Match the Negative imperative to its English translation [8 marks]:

Don’t walk!  ➤ nolite pugnare!  
Don’t fight! (plural)  ➤ noli negare!  
Don’t run away! ➤ noli lacrimare!  
Don’t cry! ➤ nolite ambulare!  
Don’t sail! ➤ nolite navigare!  
Don’t refuse! ➤ noli amare!  
Don’t fight! (singular) ➤ noli pugnare!  
Don’t love! ➤ noli fugere!

Exercise 4:

What negative imperatives might you use for these Romans? [4 marks]

a)  
b)  
c)  
d)