

Class 10

English Grammar

Topic name: Tag Questions

What is Tag Question ?

Question tags are the small questions that come at the end of sentences. We use question tags to check whether something is true or to ask for agreement.

Read the sentences in the passage below and answer the questions that follow:

Nafiz is sitting alone in the field. He looks around and speaks to himself. "Birds are free, aren't they? They can fly at large can't they? They are not the best of creations like man are they? Man is the best creation of God, isn't he? He cannot fly in the sky, can he? Birds are a part of our environment. But they do not pollute our environment, do they? It is man who pollutes his environment, doesn't he? We should not pollute our environment, should we? Our people are not educated. If they are educated they will become conscious, won't they? Our people must be educated, mustn't they? Oh! The sun is already set. I am late for home, am n't I? I have to return now, haven't I?

- Do most sentences in the passage end with a question? Pick out the questions.
- Does an affirmative sentence end with a negative question?
- Does a negative sentence end with an affirmative question?

Now look at the following examples of question tags to get more ideas about them:

1. You don't like me, do you?
2. It isn't raining, is it?
3. You've done your homework, haven't you?
4. I'm not late, am I?
5. You like Chinese food, don't you?
6. You remembered to feed the cat, didn't you?

7. There's a problem here, isn't there?

8. You think you're clever, don't you?

Some Basic Rules for Tag Questions:

- Question tags are used after affirmative and negative sentences, but not after questions.
- We most often put negative tags after affirmative sentences, and non-negative tags after negative sentences.

Examples: We are busy, aren't we? You haven't done your assignment, have you?

- Negatives are usually contracted, but full forms are possible in formal speech.

Example: They promised to repay us by the end of this month, did they not?

- If the main sentence has an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary be), this is repeated in the question tag.
- If the main sentence has no auxiliary, the question tag has do. Non-auxiliary has may have both forms.

Examples: John has passed the exam, hasn't he?

You smoke, don't you?

Linda has a set of blue eyes, hasn't she?

You have a car, don't you?

Positive/negative

Usually, if the main clause is positive, the question tag is negative, and if the main clause is negative, the tag question is positive. For example:

It's cold (positive), isn't it (negative)? And: It isn't cold (negative), is it (positive)?

He's a doctor, isn't he?

You work in a bank, don't you?

You haven't met him, have you?

She isn't coming, is she?

With/without auxiliary verbs:

If the main clause has an auxiliary verb in it, we use the same verb in the tag question. If there is no auxiliary verb (in the present simple and past simple), do / does / did is used (just like when you make a normal question).

There is one exception: the question tag after I am is aren't I.

For example: I'm in charge of the food, aren't I?

They've gone away for a few days, haven't they?

They weren't here, were they?

He had met him before, hadn't he?

This isn't working, is it?

You don't recognise me, do you?

She eats meat, doesn't she?

With modal verbs

If there is a modal verb in the main part of the sentence, the question tag uses the same modal verb.

They couldn't hear me, could they?

You won't tell anyone, will you?

Examples:

Positive sentences with negative tags:

Present simple 'be'

She's Italian, isn't she?

Present simple other verbs

They live in London, don't they?

Present continuous

We're working tomorrow, aren't we?

Past simple 'be'	It was cold yesterday, wasn't it?
Past simple other verbs	He went to the party last night, didn't he?
Past continuous	We were waiting at the station, weren't we?
Present perfect	They've been to Japan, haven't they?
Present perfect continuous	She's been studying a lot recently, hasn't she?
Past perfect	He had forgotten his wallet, hadn't he?
Past perfect continuous	We'd been working, hadn't we?
Future simple	She'll come at six, won't she?
Future continuous	They'll be arriving soon, won't they?
Future perfect	They'll have finished before nine, won't they?
Future perfect continuous	She'll have been cooking all day, won't she?
Modals	He can help, can't he?
Modals	John must stay, mustn't he?

Negative sentences with positive tags:

Present simple 'be'	We aren't late, are we?
Present simple other verbs	She doesn't have any children, does she?
Present continuous	The bus isn't coming, is it?
Past simple 'be'	She wasn't at home yesterday, was she?
Past simple other verbs	They didn't go out last Sunday, did they?
Past continuous	You weren't sleeping, were you?
Present perfect	She hasn't eaten all the cake, has she?
Present perfect continuous	He hasn't been running in this weather, has he?
Past perfect	We hadn't been to London before, had we?
Past perfect continuous	You hadn't been sleeping, had you?
Future simple	They won't be late, will they?

Future continuous	He'll be studying tonight, won't he?
Future perfect	She won't have left work before six, will she?
Future perfect continuous	He won't have been travelling all day, will he?
Modals	She can't speak Arabic, can she?
Modals	They mustn't come early, must they?

Imperatives

After imperatives, won't you? is often used to invite people to do things, and will/would/can/can't/could you? to tell or ask people to do things.

Do sit down, won't you?

Shut up, can't you?

After a negative imperative, we use will you?

Don't forget, will you?

Let's

Let's have a party, shall you?

There's

There's something wrong, isn't there?

There weren't any problem, were there?

Negative adverbs

The adverbs never, rarely, seldom, hardly, barely and scarcely have a negative sense. Even though they may be in a positive statement, the feeling of the statement is negative. We treat statements with these words like negative statements, so the question tag is normally positive.

You never care for people, do you? (Not, don't you?)

There's little we can do about it, is there?

Nobody phoned, did they?

I barely know you, do I?

You hardly ever came late, did you?

Exercise:

Use appropriate tag questions in the following sentences:

1. None can do it,?
2. Neither of them went there,?
3. Nobody went there,?
4. Everybody saw you,?
5. There is no pond in this village,?
6. It is good idea,?
7. We ought to love our country,?
8. He is a brilliant student,?
9. I am not ready,?
10. I am well,?