

Unit 9

Tag Questions

Objectives

After the completion of this unit, you would be able to–

- learn what tag questions are.
- classify different types of tag questions.
- use tag questions.

Overview:

Lesson 1: *Tag Questions*

Lesson 2: Rules for Making Tag Questions.

Answer Key

Lesson 01: Tag Questions



Tag Questions

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?

Lesson 02: Rules for Making Tag Questions

Some Basic Rules for Tag Questions:

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?

I said that, didn't I?

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: A

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,?

Exercise: B

Add question tags to the following sentences.

1. It's very hot today,?
2. You like him,?
3. Kamal will come,?
4. We must hurry,?
5. He will never give up,?
6. Your father is a doctor,?
7. You have tea for breakfast,?
8. I didn't hurt you,?
9. You aren't going out,?
10. They have sold the house,?
11. I needn't get up early tomorrow,?
12. It isn't ready yet,?

13. Hasan hasn't passed the examination,?
14. They will go home soon,?
15. He didn't paint it himself,?

Exercise: C

Complete the following sentences with appropriate tag questions:

1. She is collecting stickers, _____?
2. We often watch TV in the afternoon, _____?
3. You have cleaned your bike, _____?
4. John and Max don't like maths, _____?
5. Peter played handball yesterday, _____?
6. They are going home from school, _____?
7. Mary didn't do her homework last Monday, _____?
8. He could have bought a new car, _____?
9. Kevin will come tonight, _____?
10. I'm clever, _____?
11. He won't mind if I use his phone, _____?
12. She is enjoying herself, _____?
13. You weren't listening, _____?
14. I'm too impatient, _____?
15. Tom knows that his father is in the hospital, _____?

Exercise: D:

Match the tag questions on the right with the sentences on the left:

1. You can't answer all the questions,	a. didn't he?
2. You will help me to do the assignment,	b. will you?
3. He believes you,	c. can't you?
4. The teacher should explain the lesson,	d. doesn't he?
5. The boy didn't know the lesson,	e. can you?
6. Bob frighten you,	f. should he?
7. You can speak English well,	g. could she?
8. You couldn't arrange that,	h. won't you?
9. You won't tell him,	i. did he?
10. He shouldn't do it,	j. shouldn't he?

Answers Key:

Exercise A:

1. can they? 2. did they? 3. did they? 4. didn't they? 5. isn't there? 6. isn't it? 7. shouldn't we? 8. isn't he? 9. am I? 10. aren't I?

Exercise B:

1. isn't it? 2. don't you? 3. won't he? 4. mustn't we? 5. will he? 6. isn't he? 7. don't you? 8. did I? 9. are you? 10. haven't they? 11. do I? 12. is it? 13. has he? 14. won't they? 15. did he?

Exercise C :

1. isn't she? 2. don't we? 3. haven't you? 4. do they? 5. didn't he? 6. aren't they? 7. did she? 8. couldn't he? 9. won't he? 10. aren't I? 11. Will he? 12. Isn't she? 13. Were you? 14. Aren't I? 15. Doesn't he?

Exercise D:

1-e, 2-h, 3-d, 4-j, 5-I, 6-a, 7-c, 8-g, 9-b, 10-f