

QUESTION TAGS

QUESTIONS TAGS are small questions we produce at the end of sentences when we speak. They are used to ask for confirmation of something we are not sure about, or to ask for agreement.

→ It was not a very good party, was it?

POSITIVE SENTENCE	NEGATIVE TAG
It was a good party,	wasn't it?
Martin passed all his exams,	didn't he?



Use the contracted form

NEGATIVE SENTENCE	POSITIVE TAG
It wasn't a good party,	was it?
Martin didn't pass all his exams,	did he?



Use a pronoun to replace the noun or the noun phrase

He	is married,	isn't he?
They	are singing,	aren't they?
Mary	was ill,	wasn't she?
You	have passed,	haven't you?
Your son	ran a maratón,	didn't he?
Peter	will come,	won't he?

You	aren't 18,	are you?
They	weren't studying,	were they?
My dog	hasn't been eating,	has he?
You	couldn't do it	could you?
Linda	didn't do it	did she?
The boys	can't see it	can they?
He	doesn't Chinese,	does he?

INTONATION

The meaning of the question tag changes with the intonation.

FALLING INTONATION	MEANING → STATEMENT (we are sure of the answer)
RISING ENTONATION	MEANING → REAL QUESTION (we really want to know something)

SPECIAL POINTS

1. *Aren't I?* is the question tag for *I am*. I am wrong, aren't I?
2. After *Let's...* *shall we?* is used. Let's go dancing, shall we?
3. After an imperative,
 - *won't you?* to invite people to do sth. Have a seat, won't you?
 - *will/would/can/could you?* to ask or tell people to do things. Answer the phone, would you?
 - *can't you?* expresses impatience. Stop talking, can't you?
 - After a negative imperative, only *will you?* can be used. Don't speak now, will you?

4. Sentences with *nobody, nothing...* are followed by affirmative question tags. The pronoun for *nobody* is *they* and for *nothing* is *it*.

Nobody came , did they?

Nothing will happen, will it?

5. *Somebody/someone, everybody/everyone* are followed by tags using *they*
Somebody told her, didn't they?
6. When "*have*" is not an auxiliary but a verb referring to states , the question tag is possible with both "*have*" and "*do*" (AmE)
You have the flu, don't you?/haven't you?

EXERCISE

1. They aren't on their way already, _____ ?
2. Let's have another coffee, _____ ?
3. Those men played really well, _____ ?
4. Shut up, _____ ?
5. You seldom go to parties _____ ?
6. Nobody went to the concert _____ ?
7. She hardly said a word _____ ?
8. I am right _____ ?
9. I don't think anyone will come, _____ ?
10. Hand me the hammer, _____ ?

DID YOU KNOW?

Sometimes we use a positive statement with a positive tag to express

- Surprise
- Anger

Oh! You have a son, have you? Why didn't I know that?

You want to borrow some money, do you? You haven't paid me back from last time yet!

EXERCISE

1. Someone in the class has bought a Ferrari. Address this person and show surprise
2. Your teacher is late because she was chatting with a colleague. Show annoyance
3. Someone in the class has got a 10 in all the skills. Show surprise
4. Your teacher is leaving for the Maldives next week. Show surprise
5. Someone in the class hasn't done their homework. Address this person and show surprise

NOTE: SHORT QUESTIONS

We often use short auxiliary questions as responses to show interest and continue the conversation.

A: I spent a month in Mongolia

B: Did you?

A: Yeah! It was great!

A: I can speak a little Chinese

B: Oh! Can you?

A: Yes, I learnt it at the EOI

Write two short dialogues with your partner.