

Tag Questions

Usage

1. We use question tags often when asking for agreement, when we are 90% certain of the answer: "This place is beautiful, isn't it?"

2. We also use it when asking for confirmation so when we think we know the answer but we just want to check: "She's from Scotland, isn't she?"

Form

If the main sentence before adding the question tag is positive then the question tag is negative: "**You like him, don't you?**"

If the main part of the sentence is negative then the question tag is positive: "**You don't like him, do you?**"

She lives in London, doesn't she?
.....

They don't have any pets, do they?
.....

You are a teacher, aren't you?
.....

He can speak Spanish, can't he?
.....



Our intonation goes up at the end with the question tag when we want to express that it is more of a question, a confirmation on what we think we know. Our intonation goes down when we are more certain and just looking for agreement.



Forming Tag Questions

If the verb is a normal main verb (like, live, work, sleep, eat, drive etc) then we use the auxiliary verb "do" in the correct form.

For example:

"She lives in Paris, **doesn't she?**"

"He worked with you before, **didn't he?**"

"They didn't explain how it works, **did they?**"

If the main part of the sentence already has an auxiliary verb (be, do and sometimes have) or the modal verbs (will, would, can, could, may, might, must, shall, should) then we use them again:

With the auxiliary verb 'be':

"You are hungry, **aren't you?**"

"We weren't tired, **were we?**"

"I'm allowed in, **aren't I?**"

(Note it's impossible to say 'amn't I' so we use 'aren't' with the first person)



With the auxiliary verb 'do':

"It does the job, **doesn't it?**"

"You don't know the way, **do you?**"

When is 'have' an auxiliary verb and when is it a main verb?

Let's compare these two sentences:

"You have a car."

"You've bought a car."

In the first sentence 'have' is used as a main verb to talk about ownership/ possession so to add a question tag we use the auxiliary 'do':

"You have a car, **don't you?**"

In the second sentence, 'have' is used as an auxiliary verb so it is used again in the question tag:

"You've bought a car, **haven't you?**"

Forming Tag Questions

With the modals

With the modals here are some examples where we use them again in the question tags:

"You can speak English, **can't you?**"

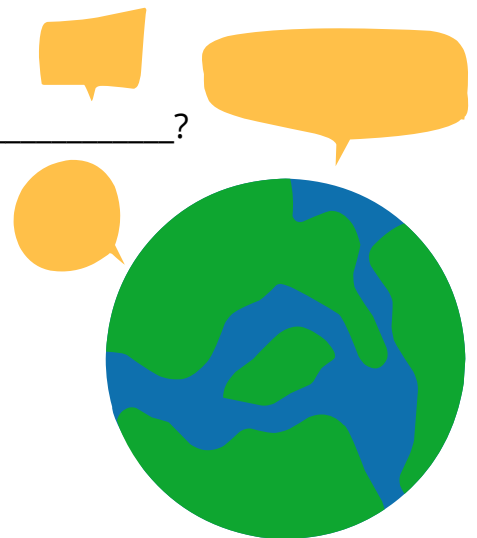
"She won't come, **will she?**"

"I should go home now, **shouldn't I?**"

Practice activity

Select the correct answer to complete the sentences.

1. It's hot here, _____?
a) doesn't it? b) isn't he? c) isn't it?
2. He's not that tall, _____?
a) doesn't he? b) is he? c) isn't he?
3. She hasn't started, _____?
a) has she? b) hasn't she? c) doesn't she?
4. I'm not too early, _____?
a) don't I? b) am I? c) aren't I?
5. You started studying English last year, _____?
a) didn't you? b) did you? c) don't you?
6. He'd like to move to Australia, _____?
a) doesn't he? b) isn't he? c) wouldn't he?
7. You won't forget to text me when you get there, _____?
a) don't you? b) will you? c) won't you?
8. He will come tomorrow, _____?
a) will he? b) isn't he? c) won't he?
9. I should go to the gym, _____?
a) shouldn't I? b) should I? c) don't I?
10. She can speak four languages, _____?
a) couldn't she? b) can she? c) can't she?



Answers

1. c), 2. c), 3. a), 4. b), 5. a), 6. c), 7. b), 8. c), 9. a), 10. c)