

Question tags (do you? isn't it? etc.)

A Study these examples:

You haven't seen Lisa today, **have you?**

No, I haven't.



It was a good film, **wasn't it?**

Yes, it was great.



Have you? and **wasn't it?** are *question tags*. These are mini-questions that you can put on the end of a sentence.

In question tags, we use an auxiliary verb (**have/was/will** etc.).

We use **do/does/did** for the present and past simple (see Unit 51):

- ☐ 'Karen plays the piano, **doesn't** she?' 'Well, yes, but not very well.'
- ☐ 'You didn't lock the door, **did** you?' 'No, I forgot.'

B Normally we use a *negative* question tag after a *positive* sentence:

positive sentence + *negative tag*
 Kate **will** be here soon, **won't she?**
 There **was** a lot of traffic, **wasn't there?**
 Joe **should** pass the exam, **shouldn't he?**

... and a *positive* question tag after a *negative* sentence:

negative sentence + *positive tag*
 Kate **won't** be late, **will she?**
 They **don't** like us, **do they?**
 You **haven't** eaten yet, **have you?**

Notice the meaning of **yes** and **no** in answer to a negative sentence:

- ☐ 'You're **not** going out this morning, **are you?**' { 'Yes.' (= Yes, I am going out)
 'No.' (= No, I am not going out)

C The meaning of a question tag depends on how you say it. If your voice goes *down*, you are not really asking a question. You expect the listener to agree with you:

- ☐ 'It's a nice day, **isn't it?**' 'Yes, beautiful.'
- ☐ 'Paul doesn't look well today, **does he?**' 'No, he looks very tired.'
- ☐ 'Lisa's very funny. She's got a great sense of humour, **hasn't she?**' 'Yes, she has.'

But if the voice goes *up*, it is a real question:

- ☐ 'You haven't seen Kate today, **have you?**' 'No, I haven't.'
 (= Have you seen Kate today?)

You can use a *negative sentence* + *positive tag* to ask for things or information, or to ask somebody to do something. The voice goes *up* at the end of the tag:

- ☐ 'You couldn't do me a favour, **could you?**' 'It depends what it is.'
- ☐ 'You don't know where Karen is, **do you?**' 'Sorry, I have no idea.'

D After **Let's ...** (= **Let us**) the question tag is **shall we?**

- ☐ **Let's** go for a walk, **shall we?** (the voice goes *up*)

After **Don't ...**, the question tag is **will you?**

- ☐ **Don't** be late, **will you?** (the voice goes *down*)

After **I'm ...**, the negative question tag is **aren't I?** (= am I not?):

- ☐ 'I'm right, **aren't I?**' 'Yes, you are.'

Exercises

52.1 Complete these sentences with a question tag.

- | | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------------|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | Kate won't be late, | will she | ? | No, she's never late. |
| 2 | You're tired, | aren't you | ? | Yes, a little. |
| 3 | You travel a lot, | | ? | Yes, I love travelling. |
| 4 | You weren't listening, | | ? | Yes, I was! |
| 5 | Sarah doesn't know Ann, | | ? | No, they've never met. |
| 6 | Jack's on holiday, | | ? | Yes, he's in Australia. |
| 7 | It didn't take long to get here, | | ? | No, just ten minutes. |
| 8 | You can speak German, | | ? | Yes, but not fluently. |
| 9 | They won't mind if I take a picture, | | ? | No, of course they won't. |
| 10 | There are a lot of people here, | | ? | Yes, more than I expected. |
| 11 | Let's go and have coffee, | | ? | Yes, let's do that. |
| 12 | This isn't very interesting | | ? | No, not really. |
| 13 | I'm too impatient | | ? | Yes, you are sometimes. |
| 14 | You wouldn't tell anyone, | | ? | No, of course not. |
| 15 | Helen has lived here a long time, | | ? | Yes, 20 years. |
| 16 | I shouldn't have lost my temper, | | ? | No, but that's all right. |
| 17 | He'd never met her before, | | ? | No, that was the first time. |
| 18 | Don't forget to call me, | | ? | No, I won't forget. |

52.2 In these situations you expect your friend to agree with you. Use a question tag in your sentences.

- You look out of the window. The sky is blue and the sun is shining. You say to your friend: (beautiful day) It's a beautiful day, isn't it?
- You're with a friend outside a restaurant. You're looking at the prices, which are very high. You say: (expensive) It.....
- You and a colleague have just finished a training course. You really enjoyed it. You say to your colleague: (great) The course
- Your friend's hair is much shorter than when you last met. You say to her/him: (have / your hair / cut) You
- You're listening to a woman singing. You like her voice very much. You say to your friend: (a good voice) She
- You're trying on a jacket in a shop. You look in the mirror and you don't like what you see. You say to your friend: (not / look / right) It
- You and a friend are walking over a small wooden bridge. The bridge is old and some parts are broken. You say: (not / very safe) This bridge

52.3 In these situations you are asking for information, asking people to do things etc.

- You need a pen. Perhaps Jane has one. Ask her.
Jane, you don't have a pen I could borrow, do you?
- You have to move a heavy table. You want Joe to help you with it. Ask him.
Joe, you
- You're looking for Sarah. Perhaps Lisa knows where she is. Ask her.
Lisa, you
- You want to borrow a tennis racket. Perhaps Helen has one. Ask her.
Helen,
- Anna has a car and you need a lift to the station. Perhaps she'll take you. Ask her.
Anna,
- You're looking for your keys. Perhaps Robert has seen them. Ask him.
Robert,