

Question Tags

Tag questions are short additions to sentences. They are used when it is not really a question that is being asked. The speaker does not want information, but agreement or confirmation of his statement.

Question tags are used a lot in spoken English.

1) When the sentence is affirmative (positive), the question tag is made by repeating the auxiliary or by using 'do, does, did' if there is no auxiliary in the negative interrogative form.

This is always used in the contracted form and expects the answer 'yes'. The subject of the question tag is always a pronoun, never a noun.

Examples :

- * It is a lovely day, isn't it ? this is a negative question tag.
- * John went to Italy, didn't he ?
- * Ann can cook well, can't she ?
- * There are plenty of taxis in Rome, aren't there ?
- * You are always late, aren't you ?
- * Sara likes Crème de menthe, doesn't she ?
- * We should take more exercise, shouldn't we ?

2) When the sentence is negative, the question tag is made by repeating the auxiliary in the ordinary form.

Examples :

- * He doesn't drink at all, does he ? this is a positive question tag.
- * Spanish women don't wear hats much, do they ?
- * You shouldn't drive so fast, should you ?
- * She is not so stupid as she looks, is she ?
- * He doesn't like cats, does he ?

Other examples :

- It is warm today, isn't it ? —————→ * It isn't warm today, is it ?
- You knew her, didn't you ? —————→ * You did not know her, did you ?
- He's been there before, hasn't he ? —————→ * He's never been there before, has he ?
- You will tell her, won't you ? —————→ * You will not tell her, will you ?

Notes :

- 1) When there is more than one auxiliary in the main verb , only the first is repeated in the tag.

Examples : She will have to go with him, won't she ?

You won't be late, will you ?

- 2) Where 'have' is used as a main verb, it behaves as a normal verb and takes the auxiliary 'do,does ,did'.

Examples : You have to work hard these days, don't you ?

He has to drive more carefully now, doesn't he ?

- 3) Where 'have' is used as an auxiliary verb, it behaves as an auxiliary verb and appears in the question tag.

Example : You have got a lovely house, haven't you ?

- 4) There is an irregular contraction for first person singular question tags :
am I not —→ aren't I.

Example : I am funny, aren't I ?

Exercise : Add question tags to the following sentences :

- 1- He has a black beard , ?
- 2- I can borrow your car , ?
- 3- He didn't see it , ?
- 4- It's cold , ?
- 5- I'm the strongest , ?
- 6- I'm not the strongest , ?
- 7- She might be hiding in the woods , ?
- 8- You wouldn't go there , ?
- 9- Anna likes nobody , ?

- 10 - Tahiti must be a lovely place , ?
- 11 - You like me , ?
- 12 – They aren't allowed to play cards , ?
- 13 - Her father died last year , ?
- 14 - They will have time , ?
- 15 - We eat too much , ?
- 16 - Tom has got a car , ?