

# Section I

## Interrogatives and Negatives

# Negatives

The Negative form of a sentence denies what is said in the original sentence.

Sometimes the positive and the negative may have the same meaning.

Compare: Half the Members of this House are fools.

Half the Members of this House are not fools

- A Negative sentence is usually **formed by inserting a negative particle** ( 'no' or 'not') after the auxiliary verb. If the auxiliary verb is absent we split into the 'do infinitive' and put 'not' after 'do'

Eg. John knows English ----- John does not know English.

- To form the negative of a sentence sometimes it necessary **to change certain assertive words**. Words like *something, to some extent, already, somebody* are assertive words/phrases and cannot be used in negative/interrogative sentences.

Eg .They are watching *something*. ----- They are not watching *anything*.

They have arrived *already*. ----- They have not arrived *yet*.

I saw him *somewhere*. ----- I did not see him *anywhere*.  
I saw him *nowhere*.

It is useful *to some extent*. ----- It isn't useful *at all*.

- **Use of abbreviated negatives** by contracting the auxiliary and 'not' into one word. In assertive sentences which have a pronoun as a subject, an alternative form of the negative is also possible.

Eg. He isn't coming. ---- He's not coming.

There is no alternative negative form for "I'm not coming."

- When we form the negative of a modal auxiliary sentence, we are negating the modal verb of the main verb itself.

Eg. You may not go swimming = You are not allowed to go swimming.  
(‘may’ shows permission.)

He won’t do what he is told. (the main verb is negated)

- Some negative ideas can be expressed with the help of such verbs as *think, imagine, suppose, believe, etc.*

Eg. I don’t think it will rain today.

The verb ‘hope’ cannot be used in this way as it changes the meaning. Such verbs can be used with ‘do’ in short answer structures.

Eg. Will there be rain? I *hope* not

- Certain types of sentences have **alternative negative forms**.

Eg. Many people came. --- Many people did not come.

Not many people came. (slight difference in meaning)

He did not see any stars. --- He saw no stars.

- Negation can be suggested by **negative adverbs** such as: seldom, rarely, scarcely, hardly, barely, little and few.

Eg. I *seldom* go there.

I *rarely* meet him.

There is *little* water in the well.

I *hardly* see him anymore.

- There are also verbs, adjectives and prepositions with negative meaning: deny, forget, unaware, careless, neither, rash, unreliable.

Eg. He *denied* that he had ever come here before.

I *forgot* to ask for a change.

He is *unaware* of any hostility.

- The negative form of auxiliary verbs like *need, dare, have* are formed sometimes with 'do'.

Eg. I did not need to go there; I met the officer on the way.

Don't you dare!

I don't have to do all the work in the office.

# Interrogatives - How to frame questions

There are many types of questions and all types of questions ask for some information. Some call for information about the subject, object, complement or adverbials of a sentence; some want the information whether somebody is something or whether somebody did something. Some questions offer two options and ask you to identify one of them.

- **'Wh' Questions**

Consider the sentence given below and examine how it leads to the questions that follow:

**They made him president during the last General Body meeting to tone up the administration.**

Identity - Who are you?

About subject - Who made him president?

About object - Whom did they make president?

Complement - What did they make him?

Adverbials - When / Why did they make him president?

Activity - What is he doing there?

The list of information sought is endless. Since all of them begin with a 'Wh' question word, they are called 'Wh' questions. It may be noted that when a 'Wh' question asks that the subject be identified, there is no change in the word order. In other cases the verb is split into 'the do+ infinitive' form and 'do' is placed in the second position.



- **Yes / No Questions**

‘Yes / No’ questions are those questions to which the expected answer is ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Such questions begin with an auxiliary verb or sometimes with the lexical ‘be’.

Eg. Is this the house that Jack built?

Are they visiting Paris?

Do you like apples?

Does she read a lot?

By placing the stress on different parts of such questions we are able to focus the question on one particular item of information. For example in the first sentence any one of the four words--this, Jack, house, built -- can be stressed.

Usually we do not use 'some' or 'somebody' in 'yes/no' type questions, their place being taken by non-assertive forms like 'any' or 'anyone'.

Compare: Someone came to see you. (statement)

Did anyone come to see me? ( question)

However, if we think that the answer is 'yes' we give a positive orientation by using 'anyone', 'some' etc. Negative orientation often introduces an element of surprise or disbelief.

Eg. Isn't your car working?

This sentence really means "Is it really true that your car is not working? I had assumed it was."

- **Alternative Questions**

Questions that offer the listener a choice of two possible replies, both of which are mentioned in the question.

Eg. Will you travel by train or by flight?

Which ice-cream would you like--chocolate or vanilla?

Is it black or grey?

Are you coming or not?

Would you like some ice-cream or cake?

- **Tag Questions**

A tag question is a short question consisting of an auxiliary verb and a pronoun and is used at the end of a sentence to ask for confirmation.

Eg. You are the manager, aren't you?

It's warm today, isn't it

He can help, can't he?

They live in London, don't they?

We aren't late, are we?

She wasn't at home yesterday, was she?

- **Declarative Questions**

These are really 'yes' or 'no' questions in the form of a statement. It is usually used only in the spoken language and it has a rising intonation.

Eg. You have got the ticket?

You are coming with us?

It's raining?

She lied?

You ate the whole thing?

- **The Exclamatory Question**

An exclamation in the form of a question. It asks for confirmation

Eg. Has she not grown?

Wasn't it a wonderful performance?

Isn't it a beautiful day?

- **The Rhetorical Question**

A rhetorical question is, in fact, a forceful statement with no expectation of an answer.

Eg. How can their glory fade?

Can the leopard change its spots?

Can I ever forget your kindness?

Who would bear these burdens in this weary life?

- **The Indirect Question**

Indirect question is a modified question in which the question part is reduced to a noun phrase. Indirect questions are not followed by question mark.

Structure: 'wh' + subject + verb

Eg. I asked him *what his name was*.

You should tell me *why you asked him to go out*.

I'd like to know *where you are from*.

Tell me *why she was so early today*.

What's what?





# Wh questions

Their primary function is to form questions but they have other functions as well.

- Interrogative pronoun-- as a pronoun used in a question to ask to specify one or more things, people or places etc. as the subject or object of a sentence.
- Interrogative adjective/ determiner-- the thing or things that modify the noun.
- Interrogative adverbs--- asks questions about time, place, manner, quantity reason.
- Relative pronoun-- replaces/ acts as the noun. Functions as a conjunction too.(who, which, that, whom, whose, where, when)
- Relative adjective--used to modify nouns and introduce relative clauses.(who, which, what, whatever, whoever, whichever, whose, whom)
- Relative adverb-- used to connect/ relate / refer the subordinate clause to the main part of the sentence. Functions as a conjunction too.( where, when , why, how)

Egs.

What happened between you and Tom?-- Interrogative pronoun (subject)

What did you call him?-- Interrogative pronoun (object)

I mean, what name did you call him?-- Interrogative adjective

When shall we three meet again?-- Interrogative adverb

I have started with the dish which is nearest to me.-- relative pronoun

You will finish your dinner only by 2 o'clock by which time all your friends would have left.-- relative adjective

Israel is one of those countries where people drive on the right. -- relative adverb.

**What** - is used when there are many or unlimited options to choose from. It can also be used as interrogative pronoun, interrogative adjective, relative pronoun, determiner, interjection.

What is your favorite kind of food?

What is your name?

**Which** - is used when there is a limited amount of options to choose from. It can also be used as interrogative pronoun, interrogative adjective, relative pronoun, relative adjective. It may be noted that which can be followed by 'of'

Which Indian economist was awarded the Nobel Prize?

Which hospital is the closest to your house?

Which of you have done this?

**Where** - is used to ask about the location of a place, person, or thing. It can be used as an interrogative adverb, relative adverb and also as a conjunction. As a conjunction 'where' can introduce a noun clause, an adverbial clause or an adjectival clause.

Where is the store?

Where is your mother?

**Why** - is used when you want a reason for something happened. It is an interrogative adverb as well as a relative adverb.

Why do you quarrel with him?

The reason why I quarrelled with him is that nobody else would quarrel with me.

**Who/ whom/ whose** - form a rather confusing group. 'Whom' is the objective form of 'who' and 'whose' is the possessive form. It can be used as an interrogative pronoun and as a relative pronoun.

Who are you?

Who(m) do you want to see?

I want to see the boy who punched me on my nose.

To whom did you address the letter?

**How** -- asking about the condition, the amount or the way in which something/someone does something. Most often used as an interrogative adverb, but it can function as a conjunction also.

How did the function go?

She told me how she managed to escape.

**When** - is used to find out about the time. It can be used as an interrogative adverb, relative adverb, relative pronoun and also as a conjunction.

When are you coming to visit?

I will come when the exams are over.

There are moments in our life when we regret the choices we have made.

The first son asks when they will meet again.

# The Question Tag

A question tag is a short question consisting of an auxiliary verb and a pronoun and is used at the end of a sentence to ask for confirmation. The statement makes an assumption and the short question invites the listener's confirmation.

- A positive sentence is followed by a negative question tag and a negative sentence is followed by a positive question tag.

He lives with his parents, doesn't he?

He doesn't live with his parents, does he?

- The subject of the statement and the subject of the tag question should be the same.

He is a dark horse, isn't he?

- The tag question has the same tense as the statement

He did not come, did he?

- Both positive and negative question tags may have a rising or a falling tone. if the tag has a rising tone , whether positive or negative, it suggests neutral expectation. On the other hand, if the positive tag has a falling tone ,it will show positive expectation and if the if the negative tag has a falling tone ,it will show negative expectation.
- If the statement uses the 'there is' construction, 'there' can be used as the subject of the question tag

There is something wrong, isn't there?



- Question tags can follow **imperative sentences** also. Most commonly used : will you, won't you, would you, can you, can't you.etc. They have a rising tone.

Sit down, won't you?

- **Same way question tags**-- both the statement and the tag are of the same kind. Usually begins with 'oh' or 'so'. Can suggest concern, anger, surprise etc.

So you are getting married, are you?

Oh you are vegetarian, are you?

Negative statements can also have same way tags suggesting an angry tone.

So you won't admit your guilt, won't you?

- **Reinforcement tags**-- they are not proper question tags. We sometimes repeat the subject and the auxiliary verb to strengthen an idea.

You are a fool, you are.

He tells lies, he does.

Wrecking your own life, you are

## **Exceptions**

- The most common mistake is the use of 'isn't it' without caring for the tense or subject of the statement it follows....very typical of South Indian English.
- I am your teacher , aren't I?----- Strange usage (amn't I / ain't I-- NOT accepted)
- If the subject of a statement is 'everybody' it will become 'they' in the question tag. At the same time, 'nothing', 'nobody' etc., change to appropriate pronouns.  
Everybody is interested , aren't they?  
Nothing can stop us, can it?  
Nobody asked for it, did they?