

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

A

Study these examples:



Have you? and **wasn't it?** are *question tags* (= mini-questions that we often put on the end of a sentence in spoken English). 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:

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

<i>positive sentence +</i>	<i>negative tag</i>
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?

<i>negative sentence +</i>	<i>positive tag</i>
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 today, **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 are only inviting 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 Lisa today, **have you?**' 'No, I haven't.'
(= Have you by chance seen Lisa 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 in sentences like these:

- ☐ 'You haven't got a pen, **have you?**' 'Yes, here you are.'
- ☐ '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** ... , 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.'