

GRAMMAR

Question tags

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_3052G

LANGUAGE

English



Learning outcomes

- I can form and respond to a range of straightforward question tags.
- I can use different forms of intonation in question tags and explain the change in meaning.



Warm-up

1. **Write** three sentences about you: two truths and one lie.
2. **Share** your sentences in breakout rooms or together as a class.
3. Can your classmate(s) **guess** the lie?



I am... / I was...

I have...

I can...

I don't...

At the cinema

Read Maria and Paula's conversation at the cinema. What is Maria not sure about?



Question tags

1. **Re-read** this part of the dialogue.
2. **Read** the grammar explanation in the blue box.



Maria

Hugh Jackman is Australian, **isn't he?**

- We use **question tags**, like *isn't he?*, to **check information** we think is true.
- They turn **statements** into **questions**.
- Compare:
 - *Hugh Jackman is Australian.*
 - *Hugh Jackman is Australian, isn't he?*

Forming question tags

Read the two sentences and the grammar explanation in the blue box.

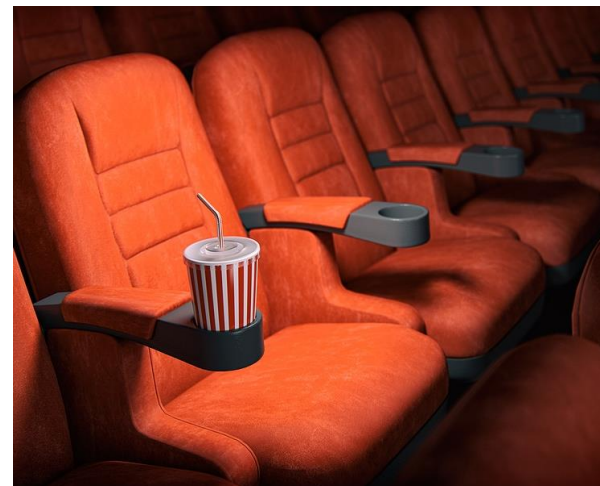


Maria is watching a film tonight, **isn't she?**



The cinema hasn't closed yet, **has it?**

- To **form a question tag**, add:
a comma + auxiliary verb + subject pronoun
to the end of the statement.
- Use a **negative tag** with a **positive statement**.
- Use a **positive tag** with a **negative statement**.





Using the correct auxiliary verb

Read each example. Then, **match with** the grammar rule in the blue box.

James is still living
in New York.



James is still living
in New York, **isn't he?**

They couldn't
come to the party.



They couldn't
come to the party, **could they?**

You eat
meat.



You eat
meat, **don't you?**

If there is:

An **auxiliary verb** (*be, have, do, etc.*) or a **modal verb** in the main sentence.

Use **the same verb** in the question tag!

If there is **no** auxiliary or modal verb in the main sentence.

Use the correct form of **do** in the question tag.



Match the two parts of the sentence

1. **Remember** to use a **positive statement** + a **negative tag**.
2. **Remember** to use a **negative statement** + a **positive tag**.

1 Our parents wouldn't like this,

a hasn't it?

2 It's been a lovely evening,

b isn't it?

3 The event hasn't been very popular,

c don't you?

4 The company is doing quite well,

d would they?

5 You enjoy coming to parties,

e has it?



Complete the table

1. **Fill in** the gaps with the **correct question tag**.
2. **Compare** your answers as a class.

Positive statement + Negative question tag

You live in London, _____?

We met two weeks ago, _____?

You've seen this film before, _____?

We'll see each other soon, **won't we?**

Negative statement + Positive question tag

You don't live in London anymore, _____?

We didn't meet at Sarah's party, _____?

You haven't been to France, _____?

We won't go to work tomorrow, _____?



Intonation with question tags

Read the blue box. Then, **go back** to the examples.



Lovely weather today, **isn't it?**



You're coming to the party this weekend, **aren't you?**

- In example one, we think the statement is true; we expect **the other person to agree!** Our intonation **goes down**.
- In example two, **we're asking a real question.** Our intonation **goes up**.
- Practise the examples with your teacher!



Practise your intonation

Read each pair of sentences aloud. Your teacher will **check your intonation**.

1



You're from Switzerland, aren't you? (**fairly sure**)
You don't know the way to the station, do you? (**not sure**)

2



We don't have any more food in the fridge, do we? (**fairly sure**)
We will be able to go, won't we? (**not sure**)

3



They can't do it, can they? (**fairly sure**)
Curt has four kids, doesn't he? (**not sure**)

4



Sophie made the cake, didn't she? (**fairly sure**)
This isn't your seat, is it? (**not sure**)



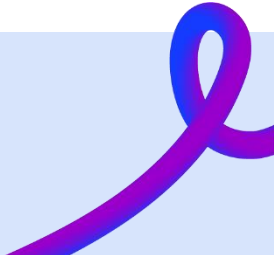
Responding to question tags

- 1. **Read** each of the statements and question tags.
- 2. **Read** the responses aloud afterwards.

Statement and Question tag		Possible response	
You're from Thailand,	aren't you?	Yes, I am.	I was born in Bangkok.
Jamal lives in the U.S. now,	doesn't he?	No, he doesn't.	He lives in Canada.
Jim's not a very good cook,	is he?	No, he's not.	His lasagne was awful!
Anita doesn't work here,	does she?	Yes, she does.	Her desk is over there.

Discuss with your class:

- Which two responses are **affirmative**? Which two are **negative**?
- **Look at** the first affirmative response. Can you use a **contracted** form here or not?





**You're from Australia,
aren't you?**

**Yes, I am. Perth to be
exact. And yourself?**

Native speakers usually respond to question tags this way. Only saying '**Yes**' or '**No**' can sound impolite!

Choose a member of your class

“

Awful weather we're having at the moment, isn't it?

Imagine you meet them at a party or at the cinema.

Start a conversation with them using a question tag.

Whose opening line and question tag worked best?





End of the lesson

Idiom

You betcha!

Meaning: used informally to say 'yes' very strongly.

Example: You're coming to Sophie's party, aren't you?
You betcha!



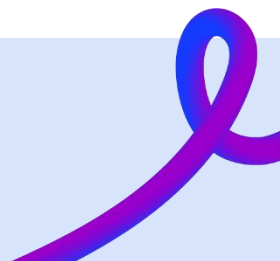
Additional practice



True or false?

Read each statement. Decide if they are **true** or **false**.

		True	False
1	Positive statements need a positive question tag.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	If there is no auxiliary or modal verb in the main sentence, we use the correct form of <i>do</i> in the question tag.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	If there is an auxiliary verb or modal verb in the main sentence, we must use a different verb in the question tag.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Negative statements need a positive question tag.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	We always put a comma before a question tag.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





Making conversation

Look at the three situations below. In each situation, imagine you are **arriving for the first time**. What **question tags** could you use to **make conversation**?

1



Work conference

*Your company recently moved office,
_____?*

2



New gym

*I have to _____ every month,
_____?*

3



Book club

The book was _____, _____?



Practising intonation

Add the **correct question tags** to each sentence. Ask five questions with **downward intonation**. Ask the other five questions with **upward intonation**. What is the difference?

1

He couldn't get tickets,
_____?

2

You don't eat meat, _____?

3

You're from India, _____?

4

You won't forget his birthday,
_____?

5

You live in Scotland,
_____?

6

He is running late, _____?

7

You have just moved house,
_____?

8

John can play the guitar,
_____?

9

She lost her phone,
_____?

10

We'll see you tomorrow,
_____?

Sure

Not sure



Question tag game



Person A

**You live in
Stockholm,
don't you?**

**Yes. You've
been before,
haven't you?**



Person B

You must answer a question tag with another question tag!

You can answer the question, but your next sentence should include a question tag

Try to ask a variety of question tags with different auxiliary and modal verbs

How long can you last?!



Answer key

P. 8: 1d, 2a, 3e, 4b, 5c

P. 9: 1. don't you 2. didn't we 3. haven't you 4. won't we 5. do you 6. did we 7. have you 8. will we

P. 18: 1. F, 2. T, 3. F, 4. T, 5. T



Summary

Question tags

- We use question tags, like *isn't he?*, to check information we think is true.
- If there is an **auxiliary verb** (*be, have, do* etc.) or a **modal verb** in the main sentence, then use **the same verb** in the question tag.

Forming question tags

- Add a comma + auxiliary verb + subject pronoun to the end of the statement
- Positive statement + negative question tag: *You studied music at university, didn't you?*
- Negative statement + positive question tag: *She couldn't come to the party, could she?*

Intonation with question tags

- If we expect the person to agree, our intonation goes down
- If we are asking because we do not know the answer, our intonation goes up
- *Lovely weather today, isn't it?* (sure, goes down); *Curt has four kids, doesn't he?* (not sure, goes up)

Responding to question tags

- It's polite to repeat the auxiliary verb used in the tag when answering, instead of just saying *yes* or *no*. e.g. *You're from Perth, aren't you?* > *Yes, I am* or *No, I'm not*.
- Only use contracted forms with negative answers, not affirmative ones: *Yes, I am* NOT ~~*Yes, I'm*~~.

