GRAMMAR GOLDEN RULES: QUESTION TAGS

+ **Positive statement,**	- **negative tag?**
It's a sunny day,	isn't it?

- **Negative statement,**	+ **positive tag?**
You haven't eaten,	have you?

Question tags

- turn a statement into **questions.**
- are used to check/confirm what we know/think is true.
- are made using an **auxiliary verb*** (e.g. is, have) and a **subject pronoun** (e.g. I, you, he)

- We contract negative question tags, e.g. It's a sunny day, **isn't** it ?(not 'is it not')
- If the main clause is positive, the question tag is negative, e.g. It's a sunny day (+), isn't it (-)?
- If the main clause is negative, the question tag is positive. e.g. You haven't eaten (-), have you (+)?
- If there is an **auxiliary verb*** in the main clause, we use the same verb in the question tag, e.g.
  - *...is..., isn't...?*
  - *...haven't..., have...?*
- If there is no auxiliary verb in the main clause, use do / does / did, e.g.
  - *Sam **lives (=** _____**)** here, **doesn't** he?*

** List of **auxiliary verbs**: be (is, am, are, was, were, being), have (had, has, having), do (did, does, doing), can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must*

A. Tags At A Glance 👀

	TENSE	+ STATEMENT, - TAG	- STATEMENT, + TAG
1	**Present simple**	He's Chinese, **isn't he**?	We aren't wrong, **are we**?
2	**Present simple (other verbs)**	They live in the city, **don't they**?	She doesn't like pink, **does she**?
3	**Present continuous**	She's singing tonight, **isn't she**? (She's = She _____)	He isn't inviting us, **is he**?
4	**Past simple**	He was late yesterday, **wasn't he**?	They weren't here last week, **were they**?
5	**Past simple (other verbs)**	She came home early yesterday, **didn't she**?	They didn't plan the party well, **did they**?
6	**Past continuous**	He was working, **wasn't he**?	You weren't fighting, **were you**?

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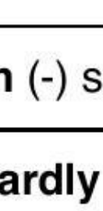
	TENSE	+ STATEMENT, - TAG	- STATEMENT, + TAG
7	**Present perfect**	She's been to Korea, **hasn't she**? (She's been = She _____ been)	You haven't met Tom, **have you**?
8	**Present perfect continuous**	She's been sleeping all day, **hasn't she**?	They haven't been cleaning their house, **have they**?
9	**Past perfect**	He'd left the house, **hadn't he**? *(He'd = He _____)*	He hadn't forgotten me, **had he**?
10	**Past perfect continuous**	They'd been trying, **hadn't they**?	I hadn't been exercising, **had I**?
11	**Future simple**	He'll be home soon, **won't he**?	They won't help us, **will they**?
12	**Future continuous**	She'll be coming, **won't she** ?	He won't be working tonight, **will he**?
13	**Future perfect**	You'll have finished by ten, **won't you**?	She won't have left home before eight, **will she**?
14	**Modal Verb**	You can do this, **can't you**?	He can't help us, **can he**?
15	**Modal Verb**	They'd clean up, **wouldn't they**? *(They'd = They _____)*	We wouldn't know the result today, **would we**?

B. Look out for these (or similar) adverbs of frequency which make statements negative (-)

	- STATEMENT	+ TAG
1	I **seldom** (-) see you,	do I?
2	She is **hardly** (-) punctual,	is she?
3	He has **never/not** (-) travelled overseas,	has he?
4	They **rarely** (-) eat out,	do they?
5	We could **scarcely** (-) hear the speaker,	could we?
6	I **barely** (= hardly) (-) know you,	do I?

Special note: She was **barely** (= only just) (+) two when she could read, wasn't she? [Compare with B6.]

Let's Practise!



- **Steps:**
- Work out what the **contractions** mean, e.g. 'she's 'can mean 'she is 'or 'she has'
- Mark out any words which make the statement **negative**, e.g. seldom, no one

1. He is the eldest in the family, _____?
2. Ben hardly attends the soccer practice, _____?
3. She can finish her work, _____?

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4. Luke didn't enjoy the show, _____?

5. Aunt Grace is visiting us tonight, _____?

6. Susan will keep her promise, _____?

7. You won't betray me, _____?

8. If you do not hand in your work on time, you will be punished, _____?

9. "Sue has never swum in the sea, _____?" asked Mike.

10. We hardly talk nowadays, _____?

11. She seldom comes on time, _____?

12. We'd never have known, _____?

13. I've been here before, _____?

14. He's eaten, _____?

15. You should not have lied, _____?

Special Cases

STATEMENT	TAG
I **am** right,	**aren't** I?
You **have** to go, He **has** a dog, *[You (do) have to go..., he (does) have a dog... More common to use the 'do' form than 'have' form.]*	**don't** you? **doesn't** he?
Nothing happened this morning, **Nobody** likes working on Sunday, *[Treat statements with nothing, nobody etc like negative statements]*	**did** it? **do** they?
Let's go for a ride, *[let's = let us]*	**shall we**?
She **used to** work here, *[With 'used to', use 'didn't in tag]*	**didn't** she?
We **ought to** be polite, *[With 'ought (not) to', 'should or shouldn't' are most commonly used.]*	**shouldn't** we?
Close the door, *[With imperatives (e.g. Do this, Come here, Stop shouting), use 'will you']*	**will you**?

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STATEMENT	TAG
Someone will lock up the room, *[If the subject is nobody, somebody, everybody, no one, someone or everyone, use "they" in the tag question.]*	**won't they**?
Jean **forgo**t to close the windows, *[= Jean did forget to...]* Aaron often **lies**, *[= Aaron does often lie...]* *[+ statements: do not interpret the meaning of the verbs 'forgot' and 'lies' and think of the statements as negative]*	**didn't** she? **doesn't** he?

For Interest: Pronunciation

If we don't know the answer and are asking a real question, we use a rising intonation with the tag question.

You don't know how to solve this, do you? ↗

If we know the answer and are just confirming the information, we use a falling intonation with the tag question.

This song is the latest hit, isn't it? ↘

Reference:
https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/verbs-questions-tag-examples.htm
http://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/tag-questions.html
http://www.eslbase.com/grammar/tag-questions

Let's Practise!

16 I am early, _____?

17 She has a lot of work to catch up, _____?

18 I couldn't help it as I was angry, _____?

19 Stop talking, _____?

20 Let's go for a holiday, _____?

21 You used to like swimming, _____?

22 We ought to leave now, _____?

23 You were late for work, _____?

24 Nothing will happen, _____?

25 Everyone is present, _____?

26 You forgot to hand in your work, _____?

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