

# **GRAMMAR: QUESTION TAGS**

Petr Novotný

Gymnázium Dr. Karla Polesného Znojmo

# WHAT ARE QUESTION TAGS

A ***question tag*** (or ***tag question***) is a little question that we add to the ***end of a statement***. Its purpose is asking for agreement or confirmation.

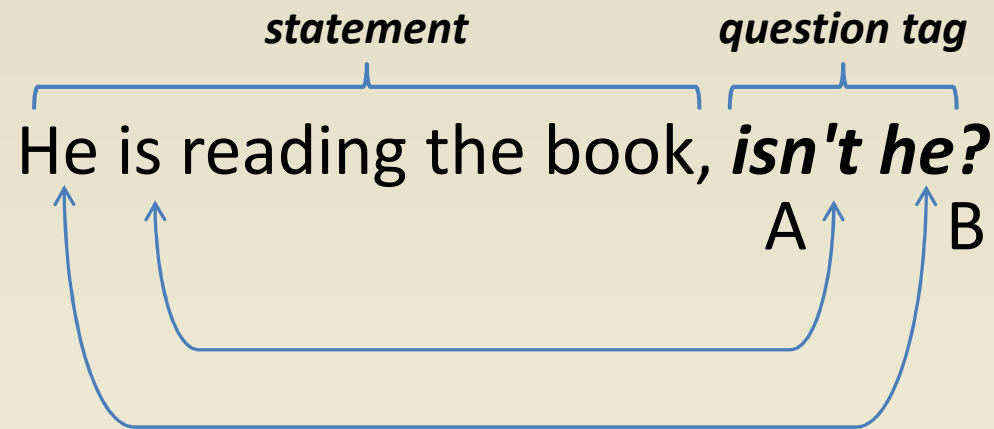
Examples:

He is reading the book, ***isn't he?***

They can't run fast, ***can they?***

The girl speaks English, ***doesn't she?***

# HOW TO FORM QUESTION TAGS



The question tag contains two words:

A: ***the auxiliary verb*** (or ***be***)

B: ***the subject pronoun*** (the pronoun matching the subject).

# A: THE AUXILIARY VERB (OR BE)

1/ If the statement is **positive**, the verb in the tag is **negative and** usually **contracted**.

If the statement is **negative**, the verb in the tag is **positive**.

He *is* reading, *isn't* he?

He *isn't* reading, *is* he?

2/ The auxiliary verb (or *be*) in the tag **matches** the auxiliary verb (or *be*) in the statement.

She *can* play chess, *can't* she?

They *weren't* working, *were* they?

You *have* seen him, *haven't* you?

3/ If there is **no auxiliary** (or *be*) in the statement, we use **do(n't)** / **does(n't)** / **did(n't)** in the tag.

You *feel* tired, *don't* you?

He *feels* tired, *doesn't* he?

They *felt* tired, *didn't* they?

## B: THE SUBJECT PRONOUN

1/ If the subject of the sentence is a ***pronoun***,  
***the same pronoun*** is used in the tag:

***He*** is reading, isn't ***he***?

2/ If the subject of the sentence is a ***noun*** (or  
***noun phrase***), a ***pronoun which agrees with***  
***the noun*** (or ***noun phrase***) is used in the tag.

***Prices*** are coming down, aren't ***they***?

***The tall girl in the garden*** is your sister, isn't ***she***?

# SPECIAL SITUATIONS [1]

Statements with words as:

***neither, no*** (adjective), ***none, no one, nobody, nothing, hardly, hardly ever, rarely, seldom*** are considered ***negative*** and followed by ***positive tags***.

They invited ***nobody***, ***did*** they?

***Nothing*** happened, ***did*** it?

John ***hardly ever*** studies, ***does*** he?

# SPECIAL SITUATIONS [2]

If the subject of the sentence is:

*anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody, someone, somebody, no one, nobody, none, neither,*

the pronoun in the tag is ***they***:

***Nobody*** arrived, did ***they***?

***Neither*** of them would complain, would ***they***?

***Somebody*** entered the room, didn't ***they***?

# SPECIAL SITUATIONS [3]

After *imperatives* (positive or negative), the question tag is always ***will you***:

***Open*** the window, ***will you***?

***Don't open*** the door, ***will you***?



# IRREGULAR TAGS

If the statements starts with

***there is, there are, ...***

the subject pronoun in the tag is also ***there***.

***There*** was a park, wasn't ***there***?

***There*** isn't a problem, is ***there***?

If the statement starts with

***I am***

the tag is ***aren't I***.

***I am*** French, ***aren't I***?

If the statement starts with

***Let's***

the tag is ***shall we***.

***Let's*** play tennis, ***shall we***?

# INTONATION IN QUESTION TAGS

Intonation is important in question tags.

There can be two kinds of intonation in question tags,

***rising*** ↗ and ***falling*** ↘ .

We've met before, haven't we? ↗

We've met before, haven't we? ↘

If the tag has a ***rising*** intonation, it means "*I'm not sure, please confirm that what I said is true*".

If the tag has a ***falling*** intonation, it means "*I know that what I said is true, so please agree with me*".

# EXERCISE [1]

***Add question tags to the following sentences:***

- a) Ann is reading a book, **isn't she?**
- b) You can't play the piano, **can you?**
- c) Tom will be late, **won't he?**
- d) You weren't listening, **were you?**
- e) Jane has got a new car, **hasn't she?**
- f) Charlie hadn't seen you before, **had he?**
- g) People shouldn't watch too much TV, **should they?**
- h) We must hurry, **mustn't we?**

## EXERCISE [2]

***Add question tags to the following sentences:***

- a) Your brother speaks Spanish, **doesn't he?**
- b) George arrived late, **didn't he?**
- c) The students work very hard, **don't they?**
- d) Lucy has two brothers, **doesn't she?**
- e) Alice has got one brother, **hasn't she?**
- f) You had your hair cut, **didn't you?**
- g) They had met you before, **hadn't they?**
- h) They had to go home, **didn't they?**

## EXERCISE [3]

***Add question tags to the following sentences:***

- a) He's opening the door, **isn't he?**
- b) She's opened the door, **hasn't she?**
- c) They'd tell you, **wouldn't they?**
- d) They'd told you, **hadn't they?**
- e) We'd rather play tennis, **wouldn't we?**
- f) We'd better leave now, **hadn't we?**

## EXERCISE [4]

***Add question tags to the following sentences:***

- a) She never goes to parties, **does she?**
- b) Nothing was said, **was it?**
- c) You can hardly expect this, **can you?**
- d) Everybody is invited, **aren't they?**
- e) Anybody can make a mistake, **can't they?**
- f) None of them is happy, **are they?**

## EXERCISE [5]

***Add question tags to the following sentences:***

- a) Listen to me, **will you?**
- b) Don't climb up the tree, **will you?**
- c) Let's take a photo, **shall we?**
- d) I'm late, **aren't I?**
- e) There isn't enough time, **is there?**
- f) There will be a meeting, **won't there?**
- g) There were hardly ever any problems, **were there?**

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Leech, G.: An A–Z of English Grammar and Usage.  
London, Nelson English Language Teaching 1989.

Thomson, A. J. and Martinet, A. V.: A Practical English  
Grammar. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1986.





INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

## DIGITÁLNÍ UČEBNÍ MATERIÁL

<b>Předmět:</b>	Jazyk anglický
<b>Tématický celek:</b>	English grammar
<b>Název DUMu:</b>	<b>Question Tags</b>
<b>Anotace:</b>	Prezentace vysvětluje princip tvorby dovětek (question tags) v angličtině včetně dovětek po rozkazech, záporných výrazech, neurčitých zájmenech a ve výjimkách. Součástí prezentace je několik cvičení na tvorbu dovětek.
<b>Autor:</b>	Novotný Petr
<b>Jazyk:</b>	angličtina
<b>Očekávaný výstup:</b>	Žáci umí správně tvořit dovětky.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	question tag, auxiliary verb, subject pronoun
<b>Druh učebního materiálu:</b>	prezentace
<b>Druh interaktivy:</b>	kombinovaný
<b>Cílová skupina:</b>	žák
<b>Stupeň a typ vzdělávání:</b>	gymnaziální vzdělávání
<b>Typická věková skupina:</b>	16 - 19
<b>Zdroje informací:</b>	Leech, G.: An A–Z of English Grammar and Usage. London, Nelson English Language Teaching 1989. Thomson, A. J. and Martinet, A. V.: A Practical English Grammar. Oxford, Oxford University Press 1986.