

4.2 Question tags and reply questions

Question tags

- Question tags are short questions added at the end of the sentence to ask for confirmation (falling intonation) or ask a question (rising intonation):
She's gorgeous, isn't she?
- We form question tags using auxiliary verbs *be*, *have*, *do*, *will* or modal verbs, e.g. *can*, *should*, and the pronoun corresponding to the subject, e.g. *I*, *you*, *she*, *they*.
- Question tags for affirmative sentences usually take the negative form:
You've already been to this café, haven't you?
They made a formal complaint, didn't they?
- Question tags for negative sentences usually take the affirmative form:
Olivia can't swim, can she?
You aren't going to reduce the price, are you?

Other forms of question tags

- In sentences with *I'm* we use the question tag *aren't I?*
I'm late, aren't I?
- In sentences with *Let's* we use the question tag *shall we?*
Let's meet for a coffee later, shall we?
- In sentences with negative adverbs, such as *never*, *rarely*, *seldom*, *hardly* or *barely*, or the words *no* or *nobody*, we use an affirmative question tag:
I hardly know you, do I?
They never listen to you, do they?
- In affirmative imperative sentences we use *will*, *would*, *can/can't* or *could*, depending on the context. In negative imperative questions we always use the question tag *will you?*
Wait for me here, will you/could you?
Don't spend too much, will you?
- In sentences where the pronoun *something* or *nothing* is the subject, we use a question tag with the pronoun *it*. If the subject is *nothing*, we always use an affirmative question tag:
Something is wrong, isn't it?
Nothing can be done, can it?
- In sentences with *everybody*, *everyone*, *no one* or *nobody* as the subject, we use a question tag with the pronoun *they* and the plural form of the verb. If the subject is *no one* or *nobody*, we always use an affirmative question tag:
Everybody/Everyone will ask questions, won't they?
Nobody/No one signed up for the dressmaking course, did they?
- In sentences with the pronoun *that* as the subject, we use a question tag with the pronoun *it*:
That's your new car over there, isn't it?
- In sentences with *there is/there are* (in all tenses), we repeat the pronoun *there* in the question tag:
There was a security alarm in the store, wasn't there?
There won't be any problems with the complaint, will there?

Reply questions

We use reply questions to show interest in what somebody is saying and to signal that we want more details.

Affirmative sentence + affirmative reply question:

'I went to the new shop in Green Street yesterday.' 'Did you?'

'Your dad lent me some money.' 'Did he?'

Negative sentence + negative reply question:

'Chris and Lisa aren't flying to Japan after all.' 'Aren't they?'

'I never buy shoes online.' 'Don't you?'

1 Choose the correct option.

- 1 She hates being criticised, *isn't / doesn't* she?
- 2 Don't buy the first coat you see, *will / could* you?
- 3 I'm the last to arrive, *don't / aren't* I?
- 4 Nobody in the complaints department helped you, *did / didn't* they?
- 5 There wasn't anything affordable in that shop, *was it /* *there*?
- 6 He's just placed his order, *hasn't / didn't* he?

2 Complete the sentences with the correct question tag.

- 1 You've forgotten to post my letters, _____?
- 2 I think I'm going to have to start again from the beginning, _____?
- 3 No matter what we do, nothing will change, _____?
- 4 Don't get lost, _____?
- 5 I guess there'll be no buses going to Woodside on New Year's Day, _____?
- 6 Everybody loves chocolate cake, _____?
- 7 Nobody's in the changing room at the moment, _____?
- 8 Let's get something to eat first, _____?

3 Write the correct reply questions to complete the dialogues.

- 1 A: I'm not going to the theatre tomorrow.
B: _____?
- 2 A: My brother never buys anything online.
B: _____?
- 3 A: I think the shop on the corner sells bus tickets.
B: _____?
- 4 A: I don't think you can book a table in advance.
B: _____?
- 5 A: They don't allow you to take your own drinks into the stadium.
B: _____?
- 6 A: Don't worry, most foreign films have subtitles.
B: _____?

LIVEWORKSHEETS