

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: _____?