

Question tags

- 1 A question tag is a short question (e.g. *isn't it?*, *haven't we?*) that we can add at the end of a statement:

Henry: *We've met before, haven't we?*

Jeff: *Yes, we have.*

- 2 Look at this part of a conversation:

Anna: *Sandra is Swiss.*

David: *No, she's French, isn't she?*

(= I thought she was French, but am I wrong?)

When tag questions really are questions, like David's, the voice goes up at the end.

But when tag questions are not really questions, the voice goes down at the end:

That was a boring programme, wasn't it?

(= I think that was a boring programme.)

- 3 Note that the verb we use in the tag depends on the verb used in the statement:

	VERB	+ TAG
be:	<i>You're French,</i>	<i>aren't you?</i>
verb:	<i>He plays golf,</i>	<i>doesn't he?</i>
auxiliary verb:	<i>It has arrived,</i>	<i>hasn't it?</i>

Thus, most verbs use **do/does**, while **be** and **auxiliary verbs** use the same verb in the question tag.

- 4 A positive statement has a negative tag:

POSITIVE	+ NEGATIVE
<i>I'm right,</i>	<i>aren't I?</i> (NOT am't I?)
<i>You're 18,</i>	<i>aren't you?</i>
<i>They're getting tired,</i>	<i>aren't they?</i>
<i>They were friendly,</i>	<i>weren't they?</i>
<i>He lives in France</i>	<i>doesn't he?</i>
<i>You speak Spanish,</i>	<i>don't you?</i>
<i>You passed your exams,</i>	<i>didn't you?</i>
<i>She has left,</i>	<i>hasn't she?</i>
<i>You can drive,</i>	<i>can't you?</i>
<i>The bus will come soon,</i>	<i>won't it?</i>

- 5 A negative statement has a positive tag:

NEGATIVE	+ POSITIVE
<i>It isn't very cheap,</i>	<i>is it?</i>
<i>We aren't going to be late,</i>	<i>are we?</i>
<i>She wasn't angry,</i>	<i>was she?</i>
<i>You don't like this,</i>	<i>do you?</i>
<i>She didn't win,</i>	<i>did she?</i>
<i>She hasn't visited Ireland,</i>	<i>has she?</i>
<i>She can't drive,</i>	<i>can she?</i>
<i>It won't rain today,</i>	<i>will it?</i>

Practice

- A Complete the conversation by putting in question tags.

Tim: We haven't met before, (1) *have we*..... ?

Jo: No, I've just arrived in this country.

Tim: You come from Australia, (1)..... ?

Jo: Yes, from Sydney.

Tim: It's very hot there, (2)..... ?

Jo: Most of the time, but not always.

Tim: But it never gets very cold, (3)..... ?

Jo: No, well, not as cold as some places.

Tim: They speak English there, (4)..... ?

Jo: Yes, that's right.

Tim: You haven't been here long, (5)..... ?

Jo: No, I only got here two weeks ago.

Tim: You're on holiday, (6)..... ?

Jo: Yes, I'm travelling around for six months.

B Complete the sentences by putting in question tags.

- The programme starts at seven o'clock, *doesn't it* ? ~ Yes, that's right.
- 1 I can use this ticket on any bus, ? ~ Yes, you can.
- 2 The bill won't be very high, ? ~ No, I don't think so.
- 3 He wasn't very polite, ? ~ No, he wasn't.
- 4 I didn't make a mistake, ? ~ No, you didn't.
- 5 It won't be a difficult thing to do, ? ~ No, I don't think so.
- 6 That was a lovely meal, ? ~ Yes, it was delicious.
- 7 You can't play the piano, ? ~ No, I can't.
- 8 They left last week, ? ~ Yes, that's right.

C Complete the conversation with question tags.

- Charles: You're going to Helsinki this week, (►) *aren't you* ?
- Marta: Yes, I'm going tomorrow.
- Charles: Helsinki is in Finland, (1) ?
- Marta: Yes, it's the capital.
- Charles: You've been there before, (2) ?
- Marta: Yes, two years ago.
- Charles: But you can't speak Finnish, (3) ?
- Marta: No, I can't.
- Charles: But a lot of Finnish people speak English, (4) ?
- Marta: Yes.
- Charles: Well, I'll see you before you leave, (5) ?
- Marta: Yes, I'll see you tonight.

D Complete the sentence with a question tag before each reply.

- A: *She comes from Italy, doesn't she?*
B: Yes, she comes from Italy.
- 1 A: You can
B: Yes, I can speak French very well.
- 2 A: You haven't
B: No, I haven't heard this story.
- 3 A: You went
B: Yes, I went to Frank's party.
- 4 A: It isn't
B: No, it isn't very far from here.
- 5 A: She won't
B: No, she won't be angry.
- 6 A: You're not
B: No, I'm not going to leave now.
- 7 A: You'll
B: Yes, I'll be at home tonight.