

108 Question tags

You aren't coming to Uncle Pete's wedding in those jeans, are you?



1 Form

There are two main types of question tag.

- Negative statement + **positive** tag:

Mr Connors *doesn't* work here anymore, *does* he? Cats *don't* eat chocolate, *do* they?

- Positive statement + **negative** tag:

Mr Connors still *works* here, *doesn't* he? Cats only *eat* meat, *don't* they?

VERB FORM	STATEMENT	QUESTION TAG
to be	Sorry, I'm really late, Trevor's going to be late,	aren't I? isn't he?
there is	There isn't a bus after 11.00,	is there?
present simple	You prefer tea to coffee,	don't you?
past simple	He didn't phone,	did he?
present continuous	They're building a new sports centre,	aren't they?
past continuous	It wasn't raining last night,	was it?
present perfect	There hasn't been another accident,	has there?
will	I'll be on time if I leave now,	won't I?
can	We can finish this work tomorrow,	can't we?

Question tags always use short forms: ... *isn't he?* ... *don't you?*



We always match the tag with the statement:

✗ *He's English, no?* ✗ *He's English, isn't it?* ✓ *He's English, isn't he?*



We can't make a question tag with *am*, so we use *are*:

✗ *amn't I* ✓ *aren't I*

2 Use

We add a question tag to change a statement into a question

We can use question tags:

- to ask for information. We say these tags with a rising intonation (↗):
I can get a bus from here, can't I? (I don't know the answer – I haven't taken a bus from here.)
You aren't coming to the wedding in those jeans, are you? (I don't know, but I hope not.)
- to ask for agreement, when we think we know the answer. We say these tags with a falling intonation (↘):
It's really hot today, isn't it? (I think it's hot and I want you to agree.)
You haven't seen that film yet, have you? (I think you haven't.)

We answer question tags with *yes/no*, a short answer and other information if necessary:

'I can get a bus from here, can't I?' 'Yes, you can. The next one is in ten minutes.'

'The bus leaves at six o'clock, doesn't it?' 'Yes, that's right.'

Practice

1 Match the sentences with the question tags.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 0 You take sugar in coffee, | A do you? |
| 1 Steve's going to sell his car, | B won't you? |
| 2 Juliet can't run faster than you, | C has it? |
| 3 The cat's had its food, | D is he? |
| 4 You don't work at Smith's, | E don't you? |
| 5 Emma can give us a lift to the airport, | F can she? |
| 6 You will remember to talk to Adam, | G hasn't it? |
| 7 It hasn't rained here today, | H can't she? |
| 8 Clive isn't back from Australia yet, | I isn't he? |

2 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the conversation with question tags.

- MIKE It was your cousin's wedding last weekend, (0) *wasn't it*.....?
- CARA That's right, in a five-star hotel with fantastic gardens.
- MIKE But it rained on Saturday, (1).....?
- CARA Yes, a bit. But it was sunny when they took the photos.
- MIKE That's good. Were there many guests?
- CARA More than a hundred, and Annabel and her husband paid for everything.
- MIKE Oh! But they're very young, (2).....?
How could they afford it?
- CARA Annabel was my grandfather's favourite grandchild.
He left her all his money.
- MIKE That's a bit strange, (3).....? So no
one else in the family got any money?
- CARA No, but we don't mind. Anyway, how was
your weekend? You went to see the tennis at
Wimbledon, (4).....?
- MIKE Yes, we did. You haven't been, (5).....?
- CARA No, I'm not interested in tennis. Anyway, you can't get tickets very
easily, (6).....?
- MIKE No, you can't – we were lucky ... Oh, nearly two o'clock! It's late,
(7).....? We should get some lunch.
- CARA Good idea. That new sandwich shop in the High Street has opened
now, (8).....?



3 Change the questions into statements and question tags.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| 0 Did Paul tell you about the party? | Paul didn't <i>tell you about the party, did he</i> ? |
| 1 Were you at the same school as Paul? | You weren't |
| 2 Is there going to be food at the party? | There isn't |
| 3 Am I included in the invitation? | I am |
| 4 Will you come home by twelve o'clock? | You will |
| 5 Did you tell Fran about the party? | You didn't |