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What are question tags?

Question tags are short questions at the end of statements. We use them when we want to ask for agreement or confirmation.

via http://www.nashaamerica.com/blogi/education/item-1364/

Question tags are very common in spoken English. We use them in two different ways:

1. confirm that something is true or not, or
2. to encourage a reply from the person we are speaking to.

For example:

- Tom: *It's a nice day,* **isn't it***? –* In this example, the speaker is not asking a real question. (*He already knows if it is a nice day or not!*)
- He is from France, **isn't he**? – In this example, the speaker doesn't really know where he comes from.

Intonation with question tags

When we are sure of the answer and we are simply encouraging a response, the intonation in the question tag *goes down*:

- Sally: *You like pizza, **don't you**?*

If Sally is sure that the other person likes pizza – perhaps she's talking to a good friend – her *intonation falls*.

When we are not sure and want to check information, the intonation in the question tag *goes up*:

- Sally: *You like pizza, **don't you**?*

If Sally is not sure, her *intonation rises*. This is more similar to a real question.

Structure of question tags

A question tag consists of two elements: a statement itself and a short question (a tag).

via http://youreng.ru/question-tags/

Rules for using question tags

1. When the sentence is *positive*, the tag is usually *negative:*

- *It's a nice day, **isn't it**?*
- *You like pizza, **don't you**?*

When the sentence is *negative*, the tag is usually *positive:*

- *He doesn't speak Spanish, **does he**?*
- *They didn't go to the cinema, **did they**?*

2. When the verb '[to be](#)' is the main verb, we use it in the question tag:

- *It**'s** a nice day today, **isn't it**?*
- *You'**re** from China, **aren't you**?*

3. The verb in the statement should be *the same tense* as the verb in the tag:

- *You <u>are</u> a good singer, **aren't you**?*
- *You <u>didn't</u> go to work yesterday, **did you**?*

- *You <u>have been</u> to London, **haven't you**?*

4. Be careful when the sentence starts with 'I am…' because the tag is '*aren't I*?'

- *I'm late, **aren't I**?*
- *I'm right, **aren't I**?*

5. If there is an [auxiliary verb](#) in the sentence, we use it in the question tag:

- *He doesn't speak Spanish, **does he**?*
- *They aren't coming to the party, **are they**?*
- *You have been to Australia, **haven't you**?*

6. If there is no auxiliary verb in the sentence, we use an appropriate form of '*do*':

- *You like pizza, **don't you**?*
- *You watched TV last night, **didn't you**?*

7. If there is a [modal verb](#) in the sentence, we use it in the question tag:

- *He can ski, **can't he**?*
- *This shouldn't take long, **should it**?*

Here's a good video from mmmEnglish explaining questions tags and their usage in our speech:

See also:

[The Verb Be in Present Simple: Statements](#)

[Verbs: Overview](#)