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

- You have been 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](#)