

106 Spoken question forms



1 Question tags

We add a question tag (e.g. *are you?/aren't you?*) to change a statement into a *yes/no* question (► Unit 61). We use *be*, an auxiliary verb or a modal verb.

TAG TYPE	+ VERB FORM	→ STATEMENT	+ QUESTION TAG
with <i>be</i>	<i>be</i>	<i>I'm in the advanced class,</i>	<i>aren't I?</i>
	<i>there is</i>	<i>You aren't still getting those headaches,</i> <i>There weren't many people there,</i>	<i>are you?</i> <i>were there?</i>
with auxiliary verbs	present simple	<i>Alice comes from France,</i>	<i>doesn't she?</i>
	past simple	<i>The doctor didn't say much,</i>	<i>did he?</i>
	present continuous	<i>They're developing a new drug,</i>	<i>aren't they?</i>
	<i>be going to</i>	<i>She isn't going to marry him,</i>	<i>is she?</i>
	present perfect	<i>The girls haven't been ill again,</i>	<i>have they?</i>
with modal verbs	<i>will</i>	<i>You'll call us when you get there,</i>	<i>won't you?</i>
	<i>can</i>	<i>Brad can speak fluent Spanish,</i>	<i>can't he?</i>

- With a negative statement we use a POSITIVE tag:
*The doctor didn't say much, **did** he?*
*You've **never** met my son, **have** you? **Nobody** wants this last biscuit, **do** they?*
- With a positive statement we use a NEGATIVE tag:
*Brad can speak Spanish, **can't** he?*

⚠ The tag always refers back to the subject: ✗ *He's English, no?* ✗ *He's English, isn't it?*
✓ *He's English, isn't he?*

We can make informal suggestions and requests with question tags:

*Let's sort out this ordering problem, **shall** we? Open the door for me, **would** you?*

Question tags have two different meanings, depending on the intonation we use.

- With a rising tone (↗) they can ask for information:
The last performance of the film is after 9.00, isn't it? (I'm really not sure of the answer.)
- With a falling tone (↘) they can ask for agreement:
You're coming with us to see the film tonight, aren't you? (I think you are but I want you to agree.)

We answer question tags with *yes/no*, a short answer and other information if necessary:
'You aren't still getting those headaches, are you?' 'Yes, I am. The doctor says they're caused by stress.'

'Charles hasn't been to football practice recently, has he?' 'No, he hasn't. Actually, he's been ill.'



Pronunciation ► 1.35