

# 39 Question tags

In spoken English, small questions are often added to the ends of sentences. These are called question tags, and they are most often used to invite someone to agree.

See also:

Present simple 1 Past simple 7  
Types of verbs 49 Modal verbs 56

## 39.1 QUESTION TAGS USING "BE"

The simplest question tags use the verb "be" with a pronoun matching the subject of the sentence.

STATEMENT QUESTION TAG

The music is very loud, **isn't it?**



### FURTHER EXAMPLES



You're cold, **aren't you?**



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

For statements with "I," "aren't I?" is used in the negative question tag, not "amn't I?"



He was tall, **wasn't he?**



I'm not talking too much, **am I?**

### TIP

Question tags are mostly used in informal situations.

### HOW TO FORM

A positive statement is followed by a negative question tag, and a negative statement is followed by a positive question tag.

POSITIVE STATEMENT

The music is very loud,

Verb is positive.

NEGATIVE QUESTION TAG

**isn't it?**

Question tag uses negative form of verb.

NEGATIVE STATEMENT

The music **isn't** very loud,

Verb is negative.

POSITIVE QUESTION TAG

**is it?**

Question tag uses positive form of verb.

## 39.2 QUESTION TAGS USING AUXILIARY VERBS

For most verbs other than “be,” a present simple statement is followed by a question tag with “do” or “does.”



PRESENT SIMPLE

Mel plays the violin, **doesn't she?**

QUESTION TAG

A past simple statement is followed by a question tag with “did.”



PAST SIMPLE

John studied art, **didn't he?**

QUESTION TAG

A statement with an auxiliary verb is followed by a question tag with the same auxiliary verb.



AUXILIARY  
VERB

MAIN  
VERB

You haven't seen my keys, **have you?**

QUESTION TAG

Auxiliary verb

Main verb describes the action.

Question tag uses the same auxiliary verb.

Statements with modal verbs such as “could,” “would,” and “should” are followed by question tags that use the same modal verb.



MODAL VERB

Tim should be here by now, **shouldn't he?**

QUESTION TAG

## 39.3 INTONATION WITH QUESTION TAGS

If the intonation goes up at the end of the question tag, it is a question requiring an answer.

**You'd like to move offices, wouldn't you?**

[I am asking whether or not you would like to move offices.]

If the intonation goes down at the end of a question tag, the speaker is just inviting the listener to agree.

**You've already met Evelyn, haven't you?**

[I already know you've met Evelyn.]