Question tags (do you? isn't it? etc.)

A

Study these examples:





Have you? and wasn't it? are question tags (= mini-questions that we often put on the end of a sentence in spoken English). In question tags, we use an auxiliary verb (have/was/will etc.). We use do/does/did for the present and past simple (see Unit 51):

- ☐ 'Karen plays the piano, doesn't she?' 'Well, yes, but not very well.'
- 'You didn't lock the door, did you?' 'No, I forgot.'

В

Normally we use a *negative* question tag after a *positive* sentence:

Kate will be here soon,
There was a lot of traffic,
Michael should pass the exam,
shouldn't he?

... and a positive question tag after a negative sentence:

negative sentence + positive tag
Kate won't be late, will she?
They don't like us, do they?
You haven't got a car, have you?

Notice the meaning of yes and no in answer to a negative sentence:

☐ You're not going out today, are you? Yes. (= Yes, I am going out)
No. (= No, I am not going out)

C

The meaning of a question tag depends on how you say it. If your voice goes down, you are not really asking a question; you are only inviting the listener to agree with you:

- "It's a nice day, isn't it?" 'Yes, beautiful."
- ☐ 'Tim doesn't look well today, does he?' 'No, he looks very tired.'
- ☐ She's very funny. She's got a great sense of humour, hasn't she?

But if the voice goes up, it is a real question:

"You haven't seen Lisa today, have you?" 'No, I'm afraid I haven't." (= Have you by chance seen Lisa today?)

You can use a negative sentence + positive tag to ask for things or information, or to ask somebody to do something. The voice goes up at the end of the tag in sentences like these:

- ☐ 'You haven't got a pen, have you?' 'Yes, here you are.'
- ☐ 'You couldn't do me a favour, could you?' 'It depends what it is.'
- G'You don't know where Karen is, do you?' 'Sorry, I have no idea.'

D

After Let's ... the question tag is shall we:

☐ Let's go for a walk, shall we? (the voice goes up)

After Don't ..., the question tag is will you:

□ Don't be late, will you? (the voice goes down)

After I'm ..., the negative question tag is aren't I? (= am I not?):

☐ I'm right, aren't I?' 'Yes, you are.'

52.1 Put a question tag on the end of these sentences.

1	Kate won't be late, will she	?
2	You're tired, aren't you	
3	You've got a camera,	?
4	You weren't listening,	?
5	Sue doesn't know Ann,	
6	Jack's on holiday,	?
7	Kate's applied for the job,	3
8	You can speak German,	?
9	He won't mind if I use his phone,	?
10	There are a lot of people here,	?
11	Let's go out tonight,	
12	This isn't very interesting,	?
13	I'm too impatient,	
14	You wouldn't tell anyone,	?
15	Helen has lived here a long time,	?
16	I shouldn't have lost my temper,	?
17	He'd never met her before,	?
18	Don't drop that vase,	?

No. she's never late. Yes, a little. Yes, I've got two actually. Yes, I was! No, they've never met. Yes, he's in Portugal. Yes, but she won't get it. Yes, but not very fluently. No, of course he won't. Yes, more than I expected. Yes, that would be great. No, not very. Yes, you are sometimes. No, of course not. Yes, 20 years. No, but never mind. No, that was the first time. No. don't worry.

52.2 Read the situation and write a sentence with a question tag. In each situation you are asking your friend to agree with you.

- 1 You look out of the window. The sky is blue and the sun is shining. What do you say to your friend? (nice day) It's a nice day, isn't it?
- 2 You're with a friend outside a restaurant. You're looking at the prices, which are very high. What do you say? (expensive) It
- 3 You and a colleague have just finished a training course. You really enjoyed it. What do you say to your colleague? (great) The course
- 4 Your friend's hair is much shorter than when you last met. What do you say to her/him? (have / your hair / cut) You
- 5 You and a friend are listening to a woman singing. You like her voice very much. What do you say to your friend? (a good voice) She
- 6 You are trying on a jacket in a shop. You look in the mirror and you don't like what you see.
 What do you say to your friend? (not / look / very good)
 It
- 7 You and a friend are walking over a small wooden bridge. The bridge is very old and some parts are broken. What do you say? (not / very safe)
 This bridge

52.3 In these situations you are asking for information, asking people to do things etc.

- 1 You need a pen. Perhaps Jane has got one. Ask her. Jane, you haven't got a pen, have you?
- 2 Joe is just going out. You want him to get some stamps. Ask him. Joe, you
- 3 You're looking for Diane. Perhaps Kate knows where she is. Ask her. Kate, you
- 4 You need a bicycle pump. Perhaps Helen has got one. Ask her. Helen,
- 5 Ann has a car and you need a lift to the station. Perhaps she'll take you. Ask her. Ann,
- 6 You're looking for your keys. Perhaps Robert has seen them. Ask him. Robert,