

English Grammar: Tag Questions / Question Tags

To confirm information, we can say a statement followed by a short question (usually two words). The question is always of **opposite polarity** to the statement. This short question is called a “tag question”. Look at some examples:

- Peter **is** Brazilian, **isn't he**?
- They **aren't** happy, **are they**?
- You **can** cook, **can't you**?
- Sheila **doesn't** like sushi, **does she**?
- He **didn't** watch the football game, **did he**?
- Rosemary hates soccer, **doesn't she**?
- Robert went to Rio, **didn't he**?
- “They Shoot Horses, **Don't They**” (1969 film by Sydney Pollack)



1) For statements with the verb ‘to be’, we repeat the verb ‘to be’:

- You **are** French, **aren't you**?
- This **is** crazy, **isn't it**?
- I'm **not** crazy, **am I**?
- John **is** never late, **is he**? (*‘never’ is a negative word*)
- I'm crazy, **aren't I**? (*exception*)

2) For statements using the structure ‘there is/are’, we use the verb ‘to be’ + ‘there’:

- **There is** a book on the table, **isn't there**?
- **There are** lots of bicycles in China, **aren't there**?
- **There wasn't** much sun yesterday, **was there**?
- **There won't** be much rain tomorrow, **will there**?

3) For statements with a modal verb, we repeat the same modal verb:

- Your friends **can** come to my party, **can't they**?
- I **should** stop smoking, **shouldn't I**?
- They **couldn't** get in my house, **could they**?
- You'd love that, **wouldn't you**? (*You'd = You would*)
- **Not** many people **would** do that, **would they**? (*the statement is negative*)

4) For statements with an auxiliary verb, we repeat the same auxiliary verb:

- We **have** seen this film, **haven't we**?
- You **will** visit me, **won't you**?
- It's raining, **isn't it**? (*It's = It is*)
- Fred and Gina **didn't** come to my party, **did they**?
- They'd seen the film before, **hadn't they**? (*They'd = They had*)
- Martin **doesn't** know me, **does he**?

5) For statements without an auxiliary verb, we must use an auxiliary verb (**do, does, did**).

- You like pizza, **don't you**?
- Your neighbours have a new car, **don't they**?
- Jeff lives in Miami, **doesn't he**?
- You never listen to me, **do you**? (*“never” is a negative word*)
- Susan speaks Japanese, **doesn't she**?
- Sammy went to school yesterday, **didn't he**?

- 6) For the words “everything”, “something”, “anything” and “nothing”, we use the pronoun “**it**”.
- Everything is fine, **isn't it?**
 - Anything will do, **won't it?**
 - Something has broken, **hasn't it?**
 - Nothing works, **does it?** (“*nothing*” is a negative word)
- 7) For the words “everybody”, “somebody”, “anybody” and “nobody”, we use the pronoun “**they**”.
- Everybody is here, **aren't they?**
 - Anybody can do it, **can't they?**
 - Somebody has taken my keys, **haven't they?**
 - Nobody likes me, **do they?** (“*nobody*” is a negative word)
- 8) For imperatives, we use “**will you**”. The tag question is usually positive.
- Don't forget, **will you !?**
 - Don't drive fast, **will you !?**
 - Come here, **will you !?** (or: Come here, **won't you !?**)
 - Be quiet, **will you !?** (or: Be quiet, **won't you !?**)
- 9) For requests, we use “**would you**”. The tag question is always positive.
- Open the window, **would you?**
 - Help me, **would you?**
- 10) For suggestions, we use “**shall we**”. The tag question is always positive.
- Let's practice, **shall we?**
 - Let's play football, **shall we?**

Example 1: Here are some examples from the American comedy show “The Big Bang Theory”:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpAfMTOg-wU> (2 mins)

- Oh, you did, **didn't you?**
- It's great, **isn't it?**
- It never is, **is it?**
- You never stop talking, **do you?**
- You'd love that, **wouldn't you?**
- Subtlety isn't her strong suit, **is it?**

Example 2: Here are some examples from a UK Motorway Police program:

<https://english.insl.com.br/files/videos/Tag-questions.mp4> (short)

- These things can be replaced, **can't they?**
- That's the main thing, **isn't it?**
- But these things happen all the time, **don't they?**
- So I bet you see cars all the time, **don't you?**
- But they happen, **don't they?**

Video suggestions:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Li7_JfIQ (9 mins)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaPH_OrsvpM (9 mins)

A British invariant tag 'innit': <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5MFpHz1Mj8> (1 min)

Audio suggestions:

<https://english.insl.com.br/files/listening/gr-inter/Tag%20questions%201.mp3>

<https://english.insl.com.br/files/listening/gr-inter/Tag%20questions%202.mp3>

<https://english.insl.com.br/files/listening/gr-inter/Tag%20questions%203.mp3>

<https://english.insl.com.br/files/listening/gr-inter/Tag%20questions%204.mp3>

<https://english.insl.com.br/files/listening/gr-inter/Tag%20questions%205.mp3>

Exercise. Write a "tag question" at the end of each phrase:

1. Bob is from Ireland, _____ ?
2. The car isn't in the garage, _____ ?
3. You are John, _____ ?
4. She went to the library yesterday, _____ ?
5. They have 3 dogs, _____ ?
6. He didn't recognize me, _____ ?
7. Cars pollute the environment, _____ ?
- 8 a. There are a lot of fish in the river, _____ ?
b. There were a lot of fish in the river, _____ ?
c. There will be a lot of fish in the river, _____ ?
9. Fred has a Ferrari, _____ ?
10. Let's go to the cinema tonight, _____ ? (*Suggestion*)
- 11 I'm right, _____ ?
12. Turn the volume down, _____ ? (*Imperative*)
13. He hasn't heard this joke before, _____ ?
- 14 a. John doesn't look like his father, _____ ?
b. John looks like his father, _____ ?
15. You did your homework yesterday, _____ ?
16. Nobody has called, _____ ?
17. You have finished cutting the grass, _____ ?
18. You weren't at school yesterday, _____ ?
19. You could help me wash the dishes, _____ ?
20. The kids hadn't eaten, _____ ?
21. Drive slowly, _____ ? (*Request*)
22. Bob always catches the 8:15 train, _____ ?

23. Tim was driving fast when the wheel fell off, _____ ?
24. You can speak Italian, _____ ?
25. You will invite me, _____ ?
26. Suzy has lived in Paris for all of her life, _____ ?
27. Get me some water, _____ ? (*Request*)
28. Let's get a pizza, _____ ? (*Suggestion*)
29. Go to bed, _____ ? (*Imperative*)
- 30 a. John does his homework every day, _____ ?
- b. John doesn't do his homework every day, _____ ?
- c. You do your homework every day, _____ ?
- d. You don't do your homework every day, _____ ?
31. This is the last question, _____ ?