

UNIT 50

Tag questions (are you? doesn't he?, etc.)

a

You're not working late, are you? It was a good film, wasn't it?

Are you? and **wasn't it?** are *tag questions* (= mini-questions that we put on the end of a sentence). In tag questions we use the auxiliary verb (see Unit 49). For the present and past use **do/does/did**: They came by car, **didn't they?**

b

Normally we use a positive tag question with a negative sentence:

negative sentence + positive tag
 Tom **won't** be late, **will he?**
 They **don't** like us, **do they?**
 That **isn't** George over there, **is it?**

And normally we use a negative tag question with a positive sentence:

positive sentence + *negative tag*
Ann **will** be here soon, **won't she?**
Tom **should** pass his exam, **shouldn't he?**
They **were** very angry, **weren't they?**

Notice the meaning of **yes** and **no** in answers to tag questions:

- You're not going to work today, are you? { Yes. (= I am going)
No. (= I'm not going)

C

The meaning of a tag question depends on how you say it. If the voice goes *down*, you aren't really asking a question; you are only asking the other person to agree with you:

- “Tom doesn’t look very well today, does he?” “No, he looks awful.”
- She’s very attractive. She has beautiful eyes, doesn’t she?

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

- “You haven’t seen Ann today, have you?” “No, I’m afraid I haven’t.”
(= Have you seen Ann today?)

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

- “You wouldn’t have a cigarette, would you?” “Yes, here you are.”
- “You couldn’t do me a favor, could you?” “It depends what it is.”
- “You don’t know where Ann is, do you?” “Sorry, I have no idea.”

d

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

- Let's go out for a walk, shall we?

After the imperative (**do/don't do something**) the tag is **will you?**:

- **Open the door, will you?**

Notice that we say **aren't I?** (= am I not):

- I'm late, aren't I?

UNIT 50 Exercises

50.1 Put a tag question on the end of each sentence.

Examples: Tom won't be late, *will he...*? They were very angry, *weren't they*?

1. Ann's on vacation,?
2. You weren't listening,?
3. Sue doesn't like onions,?
4. Jack applied for the job,?
5. You have a camera,?
6. You can type,?
7. He won't mind if I leave early,?
8. Tom could help you,?
9. There are a lot of people here,?
10. Let's have dinner,?
11. This isn't very interesting,?
12. I'm too fat,?
13. You wouldn't tell anyone,?
14. I shouldn't have gotten angry,?
15. They had to go home,?
16. He'd never seen you before,?

50.2 Read the situation and then write a sentence with a tag question. In each example you are asking your listener to agree with you.

Example: You are with a friend outside a restaurant. You are looking at the prices. It's very expensive. What do you say? *It's very expensive, isn't it?*

1. You look out of the window. It's a beautiful day. What do you say to your friend? It's
2. You've just come out of a movie theater with your friend. You both really enjoyed the movie. You thought it was great. What do you say? The movie
3. Bob's hair is much shorter. Clearly he has had his hair cut. What do you say to him?
You
4. You are shopping. You are trying on a jacket. You look in the mirror: it doesn't look very good. What do you say to your friend? It
5. You are talking about Bill. You know that Bill works very hard. Everyone knows this. What do you say about Bill? Bill

50.3 In these situations you are asking people for information, asking people to do things, etc. Make sentences like those in section c.

Example: You want a cigarette. Perhaps Tom has one. Ask him.
Tom, you don't have a cigarette, do you?

1. Jack is just going out. You want him to get some stamps. Ask him.
Jack, you couldn't
2. You're looking for Ann. Perhaps Alan knows where she is. Ask him.
Alan, you
3. You need some paper. Perhaps Tom has some. Ask him.
Tom,
4. Ann has a car, and you don't want to walk home. You want her to give you a lift. Ask her. Ann,
5. You're looking for your purse. Perhaps Liz has seen it. Ask her.
.....

C

To show surprise:

- **Didn't you hear the bell?** I rang it four times.

In exclamations:

- **Doesn't that dress look nice!** (= that dress looks nice)

When we expect the listener to agree with us:

- "Haven't we met somewhere before?" "Yes, I think we have."

Notice the meaning of **yes** and **no** in answers to negative questions:

- **Didn't Dave pass his exams?** — **Yes.** (= Yes, he passed them.)
— **No.** (= No, he didn't pass them.)

Note the word order in negative questions with **Why ... ?**:

- **Why didn't you lock the door?** (*not why you didn't lock*)
- **Why don't we go out to eat?** (*not why we don't go*)
- **Why can't you help me?** (*not why you can't help me*)
- **Why wasn't Mary invited to the party?** (*not why Mary wasn't*)

47.3 Make negative questions. Each time you are surprised.

Example: "We won't see Ann this evening." "Oh! (she / not / come to the party tonight?)"
Isn't she coming to the party tonight?

1. "I hope we don't meet Brian tonight." "Why? (you / not / like him?)"
2. "I'll have to borrow some money." "Why? (you / not / have / any?)"
3. "Don't go and see that movie." "Why? (it / not / be / good?)"

47.4 Make negative questions with "Why . . . ?"

Examples: (I didn't lock the door.) *Why didn't you lock the door?*
(Mary wasn't invited to the party.) *Why wasn't Mary invited to the party?*

1. (I don't like George.) you
2. (Jim wasn't at work today.) Why
3. (I'm not ready yet.) Why
4. (Sue doesn't eat fruit.)
5. (Maria can't come to the meeting.)