

English With Nimafar

Tag Questions

Overview:

- Tag Questions is an intermediate Grammar topic
- At the end of this lesson, you will be able to use tags in your daily conversations.

Date:
27/04/2023

What are Tag Questions?

Tag questions can be used to express a variety of meanings, such as seeking confirmation, seeking agreement, disagreement, asking questions, giving suggestions or giving orders. We change our intonation when we use tags.

Intonation

When we want to ask questions and expect a response, we rise our intonation. But when we just state our opinions and we do NOT expect a response, we make it fall.

Example:

- It's beautiful, isn't it? (Falling - We don't need a response here)
- You're a doctor, aren't you? (Rising - We need a response here)

Is it formal?

No, The Tag Question Grammar is very informal, and rarely do we use it in formal speaking.

The Structure:

Main Clause	Tag Form
Positive	Negative
Negative	Positive

Basic Examples

- It's beautiful, isn't it?
- He's a mechanic, isn't he?
- You are in 11th grade, aren't you?
- Your car is BMW, isn't it?
- Let's go, shall we?
- Open the door, will you?

When do we use tags?

There are 4 main reasons why we use tags.

- Questions
- Statements
- Suggestions
- Imperatives

Questions

We use tag questions with rising intonation when we are asking questions. We don't make the main clause a question. We write main clauses as statements.

Example:

- You're a teacher, aren't you? (NOT ~~Are you a teacher, aren't you?~~)

Statements

Sometimes we just state our statements, and we don't actually need a response, but maybe a confirmation can be helpful. Or even disagreements which show that our contact doesn't agree with us.

Example:

- Nice day, isn't it?
- It's hot, isn't it?
- It's foggy, isn't it?
- Yesterday, the weather wasn't cold, was it?

Suggestions

Sometimes we would like to give suggestions. We use the modal verb "Shall" in our tags, and we begin our main clause with "Let's." And, of course, with a rising intonation.

Examples:

- Let's go to the theatre, shall we?
- Let's go, shall we?
- Let's play God of War, shall we?
- Let's not drink, shall we?

Note: We use **Let's + not + bare infinitive + "comma(,)" + shall we?** when we want to say: **I suggest we don't [verb], do you agree with me?**

Imperative

We use tag questions when we want to give orders. We use the modal verb "will" as the common tag for imperatives, but there are other tags as well. Look at the table below.

Will you?	Won't you?
Can you?	Can't you?
Could you?	Would you?

Example:

- Pay attention, would you?
- Take a seat, will you?
- Pass me the salt, could you?
- Get some rest, won't you?

Can't you? VS Can you?

When "can't" is used in an imperative tag question, it generally implies irritation or frustration on the part of the speaker. On the other hand, when "can" is used in an imperative tag question, it can convey a more neutral or polite tone and often seeks agreement or confirmation. However, the tone and intention of the speaker can vary depending on the context of the conversation and the relationship between the speaker and listener.

Note: In written English, we can use a question mark + an exclamation mark to express the feeling for "can't." (?!)

- Pass me the sugar, can you?
- Help me, can't you?!
- Shut up, can you?
- Shut up, can't you?
- Don't play inside, can you?
- Oh my God! Stop speaking loudly, can't you?!

Universal Tags

As mentioned that this Grammar is informal; we can make it more informal. There are some tags that make your sentences very informal.

Such as right, yeah, ok, okay, hmm, etc...

Examples:

- You like music, right?
- Be quiet, okay?
- Let's go to the park, hmm?

- Nice day, yeah?
- Do the dishes, ok?

Don't make this mistake!

We do not start the tag with a capital letter.

- You are a mechanic, aren't you? (NOT ~~Aren't~~ you?)
- Let's go, shall we? (Not ~~Shall~~ we?)

Negative Adverbs

When we use negative adverbs in our sentences, we automatically give a negative meaning to them. For instance, when we say, "I never read books", it actually means I don't read books. So the main clause isn't positive/affirmative anymore. It will be negative, so we use a positive tag.

Negative adverbs such as rarely, barely, never, hardly, hardly ever, seldom, scarcely, etc.

- You never watch movies, do you?
- He has never been able to pass an exam, has he?
- We seldom met each other, did we?
- Never does Jack play basketball, does he? (Inversion)
- They had seldom paid attention to the class before the teacher shouted at them, had they?

Others

- We ought to leave, **shouldn't we?**
- There aren't any cookies left, **are there?**
- At least I am here on time, **aren't I?**
- At least I am here on time, **am I not?**

Note: We use "am I not" or "aren't I" for the subject "I". We do NOT say ~~amn't I~~ or ~~such things~~.

Examples

1. Have a drink, will you?
2. Don't tell anyone, can you?
3. Come with me, won't you?
4. Don't give up, can you?
5. Stop talking, could you?
6. Help me, will you?
7. Don't leave me behind, can you?
8. Take care of yourself, okay?
9. Don't be too hard on yourself, will you?
10. Be patient, can't you?
11. Let's have dinner together tonight, shall we?
12. Let's go to the concert, shall we?
13. Let's take a walk, okay?
14. Let's watch a movie, shall we?
15. Let's go for a drive, okay?
16. Let's go shopping, shall we?
17. Let's get some fresh air, okay?
18. Let's try a new restaurant, shall we?
19. Let's go to the beach, okay?
20. Let's have a picnic, shall we?
21. The concert was amazing, wasn't it?
22. The food is delicious, isn't it?
23. The weather is lovely today, isn't it?
24. The movie was so good, wasn't it?
25. The traffic is terrible, isn't it?
26. He hardly ever makes mistakes, does he?
27. She rarely goes out on weekends, does she?
28. They hardly know each other, do they?
29. We seldom have time for ourselves, do we?
30. He never remembers my birthday, does he?
31. You mustn't be late, must you?
32. He might have changed his mind, mightn't he?
33. They should have called first, shouldn't they?
34. We will finish on time, won't we?
35. You might want to reconsider, mightn't you?
36. He can't have gone far, can he?
37. They will have to find another way, won't they?
38. We may have to reschedule, mayn't we?
39. You would be surprised, wouldn't you?
40. He should have been here by now, shouldn't he?

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