

ECHO QUESTIONS (Short questions used in replies)

We often reply to statements by making short questions, containing just an **auxiliary verb** and a **personal pronoun**.

Statement: "It was an awful party."	Question: "Was it?"	Answer: "Yes, there was nobody there I know".
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These 'reply questions' do not ask for information. They express interest, concern, surprise, anger, or other reactions, depending on the intonation. Their most common use is just to show that we are listening.

Bob: "We had a lovely holiday."	Maria: "Did you?"	Bob: "Yes, we went to New Zealand"
Bob: "I've got a headache."	Maria: "Have you, dear? I'll get you an aspirin".	

In reply questions, we use the same auxiliary verb that was used in the sentence we are answering. If there was no auxiliary verb, we use 'do'.

He smokes too much.	Does he?	Yes, he tried to give it up but ...
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We use negative echo questions in reply to negative statements.

It wasn't a very good film.	Wasn't it? That's a pity!	
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QUESTION-TAGS

A tag question is a question we can add to the end of a statement, it's a sort of "reply question". It is used at the end of a sentence to ask for confirmation or agreement. A question-tag means "is it true?" or "do you agree?"

The basic rules are as follows:

- * the subject in the statement matches the subject in the tag
- * If the main clause has an *auxiliary verb* (including *modal verbs*) or the verb *to be*, the question-tag has the same auxiliary
- * If the main clause has not an auxiliary verb or *to be*, "DO" is used in the question-tag
- * if the statement is positive, the tag is usually negative and vice versa

You've posted my letters, haven't you?
You're sad that I'm going, aren't you?
You like opera, don't you?
She left her job, didn't she?

You won't forget to check my emails, will you?
You can help her, can't you?
Jack doesn't go out often, does he?
He didn't like the idea, did he?

The meaning of a question-tag changes with the intonation. If the intonation is falling (with the voice going down in pitch: **La, la, la**) it makes the sentence sound more like a statement.

If the intonation is rising (**la, la, La**) the sentence is more like a real question

Nice day, isn't it? (falling intonation – not a real question)

You haven't seen Bob anywhere, have you? (rising intonation – real question)

We can reply to tag-questions either with simple yes/no answers (negative tags normally expect a yes answer and positive tags normally expect a no answer) or by using yes/no + auxiliary verb.

You haven't seen my tennis shoes, have you? No, I'm sorry. I haven't.
It's been a lovely day today, hasn't it? Yes. Gorgeous.

Special features:

- **Negative Adverbs:** *never, rarely, seldom, hardly, barely and scarcely* have a negative sense:
She's never been here before, has she? We hardly know the man, do we?
- **Imperatives:** question-tags with imperatives for invitations or orders. These are not real questions they mean something like “please”, but they often have a rising intonation:
Invitations: We use *won't*: *Come in, won't you? - Do sit down, won't you? - Take a seat, won't you?*
Orders/requests: We use *can, can't, will, would* for orders (to tell or ask people to do things)
Help me, can you? (quite friendly) - Help me, can't you? Shut up, can't you? (expresses impatience or some irritation?) - Close the door, would you? (quite polite) Give me a hand, will you? (less polite than would)
- **negative imperatives** only *will* is possible: *Don't forget, will you?*
- **There** can be used in question-tags: *There's nothing wrong, is there? - There weren't any problems, were there?*
- **Something / nothing / somebody / nobody / no one etc:** we use “*it*” in the tag to refer to *something* or *nothing* and “*they*” in the tag to refer to *someone, nobody*, etc.:
Something happened at Jack's house, didn't it? No one phoned, did they?
Somebody wanted to borrow Jack's bike, didn't they? Who was it?
- **Let's:** After *let's* we sometimes add *shall we?* when we are making a suggestion: *Let's have some tea, shall we?*
- **Omission of pronoun subject and auxiliary verb:** In very informal speech, we sometimes leave out pronoun subjects, auxiliary verbs and verb to be in the statement:
Awful weather, isn't it? (= It's awful weather, isn't it?) Keeping well, are you? (=You're keeping well, are you?)
Nobody at home, is there? (=There's nobody at home, is there?)

I (don't) think

Note the use of question tags in sentences beginning with *I (don't) think* and similar expressions.

I think he's Norwegian, isn't he? (not: ... don't I?) I don't think it will rain, will it? (not: ... do I?)

I suppose you're hungry, aren't you?

• **Question-tag after I am:**

The question-tag after **I am** is: “*aren't I?*”

I am right, aren't I?

Simpler question tags

In informal speech, simpler tags such as **No?** (after affirmatives) and **Right?** Are very often used to check information or ask for agreement.

We're seeing her tomorrow, no? They all speak English, right?

You haven't got a ticket, right?

Right can also be used, rather aggressively, to mean ‘Is that clear to you?’

This is your last chance, right? I'm not working extra hours, right?

In non-standard speech, **isn't it?** / **innit?** is common as a universal question tag (isn't it, isn't he/she, aren't they, isn't there and many other end-of-sentence questions): *It's your birthday today, innit?*

• **“Same way” question-tag**

Non-negative question tags are quite common after affirmative sentences. These are often used as responses to something that has been said: the tag is used to express interest, surprise, concern or some other reaction.

So you're getting married, are you? How nice! So she thinks she's going to become a doctor, does she? Well, well.

You think you're funny, do you?

‘Same-way’ tags can also be used to ask questions. In this structure, we use the main sentence to make a guess, and then ask (in the tag) if it was correct: *Your mother's at home, is she? This is the last bus, is it?*

You can eat shellfish, can you?

I'll , shall I? can be used to make offers: *I'll hold that for you, shall I?*

Negative ‘same-way’ tags are occasionally heard; they usually sound aggressive.

I see. You don't like my cooking don't you? In negative sentences “same way” tags usually sound aggressive: *So you don't like my cooking, don't you?*

Complete the questions.

1. It's next to the supermarket, _____?
2. You've met my brother before, _____?
3. He was born in 1970, _____?
4. Bela can help, _____?
5. I'm right, _____?
6. You can't drive down that road, _____?
7. They won't be late, _____?
8. You're coming tomorrow, _____?
9. Sue: "I'm living in New York, now". John: _____?
10. None of your students completed the test, _____?
11. Nothing was sold at the Fair, _____?
12. Hand me the hammer, please, _____?
13. Neill: "I've lost all my money." Bob: _____?
14. She rarely cries, _____?
15. He hardly spoke to you, _____?
16. There's nothing wrong, with it, _____?
17. I don't think anyone will come, _____?
18. Somebody eats fried grasshoppers, _____?

KEY

1. It's next to the supermarket, isn't it?
2. You've met my brother before, haven't you?
3. He was born in 1970, wasn't he?
4. Bela can help, can't she?
5. I'm right, aren't?
6. You can't drive down that road, can you?
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9. Sue: "I'm living in New York, now". John: are you?
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12. Hand me the hammer, please, will you?
13. Neill: "I've lost all my money." Bob: have you?
14. She rarely cries, does she?
15. He hardly spoke to you, did he?
16. There's nothing wrong, with it, is there?
17. I don't think anyone will come, will they?
18. Somebody eats fried grasshoppers, don't they?

Tag Questions Quiz – choose the correct answer

1. He's still sleeping, _____
a) is not he? b) isn't he? c) wasn't he?
2. You do go to school, _____
a) do you? b) aren't you? c) don't you?
3. Let's go for a walk, _____ Let
a) shall we? b) shan't we? c) will we?
4. We won't be late, _____
a) won't we? b) will we? c) are we?
5. Nobody called, _____
a) do they? b) didn't they? c) did they?
6. They will wash the car, _____
a) will it? b) won't they? c) wouldn't they?
7. We must lock the doors, _____
a) mustn't they? b) shouldn't we? c) mustn't we?
8. I'm right, _____
a) amn't I? b) am not I? c) aren't I?
9. So you bought a car, _____

- a) did you? b) haven't you? c) weren't you?
10. You wouldn't like to invite my Dad, _____
a) did you? b) would you? c) won't you?

Correct answers:

1. isn't he?
2. don't you?
3. shall we?
4. will we?
5. did they?
6. won't they?
7. mustn't we?
8. aren't I?
9. did you?
10. would you?