

Grammar Lesson

QUESTION TAGS

A question tag is used at the end of a statement to ask someone to agree with us, or to keep a conversation going, or to ask a genuine, real question:

It was lovely seeing those buildings, wasn't it?
They looked impressive, didn't they?

These are some examples of question tags to ask for someone's agreement or to keep a conversation going.

You're not going to throw up, are you?

Helen really doesn't know if Michael is going to vomit or not, so this is an example of a tag to ask a genuine question.

Question tags - form

A question tag is made up of a statement and a tag. If the statement is positive, the tag is negative:

She's a teacher, isn't she?
He's handsome, isn't he?

If the statement is negative, the tag is positive:

You don't know where the nearest bank is, do you?
He can't speak Portuguese, can he?

If the statement uses an auxiliary or modal verb, the tag uses the same verb:

We should bring a present, shouldn't we?
They're married, aren't they?

If the statement doesn't use an auxiliary verb, the tag verb is 'do':

She plays tennis well, doesn't she?
They don't work in Bombay, do they?

The usual tag for 'am I' is 'aren't I?':

I'm wrong, aren't I?

But note that some versions of English (for example, Scottish and Irish English) the tag is 'amn't I?':

I'm late, amn't I?

The tag for 'Let's' is 'shall we?':

Let's go to the party, shall we?

Question tags - intonation

The meaning of a question tag changes if your voice goes up or down when you say it.

If your voice goes down (from high to low in tone), you are not asking a real question; you are simply asking the other person to agree with you (this usually happens when you are making "small talk" or having conversations about unimportant things).

For example:

She's a very pretty bride, isn't she?

It was lovely seeing all those famous buildings, wasn't it?

If your voice goes up, you are asking a real question. For example:

They live in Paris, don't they?

But you are OK, aren't you?

Vocabulary:

hunk (adj, to describe a man, informal): handsome, good-looking

to look green (idiom): to look ill or sick, or as if you are going to vomit

to throw up (verb): to be physically sick, to vomit

to fancy (verb, informal): to be romantically or sexually attached to someone

@skypeclass