

Unit 52

Question tags (are you? doesn't he? etc.)

a You haven't got a car, **have you?** It was a good film, **wasn't it?**

Have you? and **wasn't it?** are *question tags* (= mini-questions which we put on the end of a sentence). In question tags we use the auxiliary verb (see **Unit 51a**). For the present and past simple use **do/does/did**:

- They came by car, **didn't they?**

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

negative sentence + *positive tag*

And normally we use a negative question tag 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 question tags:

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

c The meaning of a question tag 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's got beautiful eyes, **↓hasn'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 not.'
(= 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 haven't got a cigarette, **↑have you?**' 'Yes, here you are.'
- 'You couldn't do me a favour, **↑could you?**' 'It depends what it is.'
- 'You don't know where Ann is, **↑do you?**' 'Sorry, I've no idea.'

d After **Let's ...** the question tag 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?** - **Don't be** late, **will you?**

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

- I'm late, **aren't I?**