

Tag Questions

A tag question is a question added at the end of a sentence.

Maria is here, isn't she? Maria isn't here, is she?

We use tag questions for two reasons:

1. To make sure our information is correct or
2. To seek agreement.

Forming tag questions

Positive sentences—Mary is here—take a negative tag question—*isn't she?*

Negative sentences—Mary isn't here—take a positive tag question—*is she?*

+ sentence - tag + answer

Mary is here, isn't she? Yes, she is.
You like tea, don't you? Yes, I do.
They have left, haven't they? Yes, they have.

- sentence + tag - answer

Mary isn't here, is she? No, she isn't.
You don't like tea, do you? No, I don't.
They haven't left, have they? No, they haven't.

Certain complications

- This/That is your book, isn't it?
- These/Those are your books, aren't they?
- There is a meeting tonight, isn't there?
- Everything is okay, isn't it?
- Everyone/somebody took the test, didn't they?
- Nothing is wrong, is it?
- Nobody called, did they?
- You've never been there, have you?

The problem with (I)

- I am supposed to be here, am I not? (formal English)
- I am supposed to be here, aren't I? (spoken English)

Intonation

- Mary is here, isn't she? Rising intonation: you are asking if your information is correct.
- Mary isn't here, is she? Falling intonation: you think your information is correct, and you are almost certain the listener will agree.