

TAG QUESTIONS

CH. 13 PART TWO

Prepared By: Mohammad Hassan

Tag Questions

They are short yes/no questions added to statements. They are conversation forms and seldom occur in writing except in reported speech. Sometimes tag questions are used just to keep the conversation going; other times the speaker is not absolutely sure of his statement and he is asking for confirmation. The two different situations are reflected in the intonation.

Many languages have just one tag which is added to all statements. English is more complicated. There is a separate tag for each sentence pattern. Observe the following facts about conversation questions:

a. When the statement is affirmative, the question is negative; when the statement is negative, the question is affirmative.

b. When the verb in the statement is a single form of be, the verb in the question is the same form.

Taxes are high in College Town, aren't they?

That's right, isn't it?

c. When the verb in the statement is a single form of any verb except be, the verb in the question is that same form (simple, -s, or past) of do.

You live in an apartment, don't you?

Professor Miller lives in an apartment, doesn't he?

Six years ago the Aliens lived in an apartment, didn't they?

d. In most other cases, the verb in the question is the first auxiliary of the verb phrase.

You've owned this house quite a while, haven't you?

It will be six years soon, won't it?

You're not going to sell it, are you?

We hadn't thought of selling it, had we?

e. When the verb phrase in the statement is made with *used to* or *have to*, the verb in the question is do.

The Aliens used to live in an apartment, didn't they?

They didn't have to pay property taxes then, did they?

They have to pay taxes now, don't they?

f. The second word of a tag question is always: *the subject form of a personal pronoun* (I, 6), or *one of the expletives it* (VIII, 6), or *there* (III, 11). It is never a noun or any other noun substitute.

This is a hard lesson, isn't it?

There are many tag questions in English, aren't there?

Learning all of them takes a long time, doesn't it?

You have only one tag in your language, don't you?

g. Statements made about one's self with the verb be are generally made in the negative, due to the lack of a contraction of *am + not* (I, 8). If the statement is affirmative, the full form must be used in the question. Though it sounds a bit pedantic, it is certainly quite acceptable.

I'm not late, am I?

I'm not going to see you again, am I?

I'm going to see you again, am I not?

h. Responses to tag questions are the same as responses to any other yes/no questions. They vary according to facts and opinions.

Verb with preposition

Verb with preposition in this lesson is grow up-to change from an infant to an adult.

Punctuation

Taxes are high here (,) aren't they?

That's right (,) isn't it?

Note the punctuation of a sentence containing a tag question. **A comma (not a period or a semicolon)** precedes the question. The first word of the question begins with **a small letter, not a capital**. A question mark is placed at the end.

THE END OF PART TWO