

QUESTION TAG

BHARAT SCHOOL OF BANKIG – VELLORE-1

Questions and tags

To ask a question in English you must usually use one of the auxiliary verbs (*be, do, have*) or a modal verb such as *can, will, may*. If you are expecting a *yes/no* answer, then the question starts with the auxiliary or modal. Here are some examples:

- Is she Japanese?
- Do you like German food?
- Can you play chess?
- Have you seen Miho?
- Must I go to school tomorrow?
- Did you know the answer?
- Is she coming to your party?
- Will you be able to help me?

If you want more information than a simple *yes/no* answer, you must ask a question starting with one of the following question words: *what, where, when, why, which, who(m), whose, how*. In this kind of question you also normally use an auxiliary or modal:

- What did you say?
- Where does she live?
- When can you play chess?

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- Why must I go to school tomorrow?
- Which book have you borrowed?
- Who has taken my calculator?
- Whose bag is this?
- How did you know the answer?

* Note that questions starting with the question words *what/who/whose* do not need an auxiliary verb in the **simple present or past**. For example: *What happened? Who knows the answer? Whose parents came to Open Day?*

The questions *what, which, whose* are often followed by a noun (before the auxiliary/modal). The question *how* is often followed by an adjective. Look at the following examples:

- What time must we be there?
- What kind of music do you listen to?
- Which painting do you like the best?
- Whose parents are coming to the meeting tomorrow?
- How long have you lived in Germany?
- How much money do you have?
- How far is your house from the school?

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We quite often want to ask a question containing a preposition. In spoken English the preposition is usually put at the end of the question, as in the following examples?

- Who did you go to the party *with*?
- Who are you talking *to*?
- What are you talking *about*?
- Where is Miho *from*?
- What did you say that *for*?
- What kind of place do you live *in*?

Note: It is possible to begin questions with the preposition.

With whom did you go to the party? From where is Miho?

A special type of question is the *tag* that English speakers put at the end of many statements.

- It's a lovely day today, isn't it?
- You live in Frankfurt, don't you?
- Miho can't speak German, can she?
- You haven't seen Miho, have you?
- His parents are very old, aren't they?
- You will remember to call me, won't you?

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Tags are very common in spoken English, and have many functions. One of the common functions is to start a conversation or help keep it going. The two basic rules about tag questions are:

1. If the statement is **negative**, the tag must be positive. If the statement is positive the tag must be **negative**.

- **You don't like me**, do you?
- **You won't tell him my secret**, will you?
- **He doesn't speak German**, does he?
- You're coming to my party, **aren't you**?
- She's really good at chess, **isn't she**?
- You haven't done your homework, **have you**?

2. The tense of the tag is determined by the tense of the auxiliary/modal verb of the statement that precedes it. If the statement does not use an auxiliary/modal (i.e. it is in the present or past simple tense), then the auxiliary *to do* must be used.

- She comes from Korea, doesn't she?
- You like heavy metal music, don't you?
- He got top grade in the math test, didn't he?
- I really messed up, didn't I?