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Grammar Reference

1. Grammar Reference: Question tags

We use **question tags** in spoken English to check information and to keep the conversation going.

Tag questions are made by using an **auxiliary verb** (for example: **be** or **have**) and a **subject pronoun** (for example: **I, you, she**). Negative question tags are usually contracted.

Example: It **is** warm today, **isn't it?**
They **are** Cambodian, **aren't they?**

Usually if the main clause is **positive**, the question tag is **negative**, and if the main clause is **negative**, it's **positive**.

Example: We **don't have** to pay taxes (*negative*), **do we** (*positive*)?
It **is** cold (*positive*), **isn't it** (*negative*)?

If there is no auxiliary verb, use **do, does, did**, or their negatives.

Example: She **went** to the super market, **didn't she?**
I **know** how to solve it, **don't I?**

Note: There is one weird exception: the question tag after **I am** is **aren't I**.

Example: I'm in charge of the food, **aren't I?**

Positive sentences, with negative tags	
Present simple 'be'	She is Italian, isn't she?
Present simple other verbs	They live in London, don't they?
Present continuous	We are working tomorrow, aren't we?
Past simple 'be'	It was cold yesterday, wasn't it?

Past simple other verbs	He <i>went</i> to the party last night, <i>didn't he?</i>
Past continuous	We <i>were waiting</i> at the station, <i>weren't we?</i>
Past perfect continuous	We <i>had been working</i> , <i>hadn't we?</i>
Future simple	She <i>will</i> come at six, <i>won't she?</i>
Future continuous	They <i>will be arriving</i> soon, <i>won't they?</i>
Modals	He <i>can</i> help, <i>can't he?</i>
Modals	John <i>must</i> stay, <i>mustn't he?</i>

<i>Negative sentences, with positive tags</i>	
Present simple 'be'	We <i>aren't</i> late, <i>are we?</i>
Present simple other verbs	She <i>doesn't</i> have any children, <i>does she?</i>
Present continuous	The bus <i>isn't coming</i> , <i>is it?</i>
Past simple 'be'	She <i>wasn't</i> at home yesterday, <i>was she?</i>
Past simple other verbs	They <i>didn't</i> go out last Sunday, <i>did they?</i>
Past continuous	You <i>weren't sleeping</i> , <i>were you?</i>
Past perfect continuous	You <i>hadn't been sleeping</i> , <i>had you?</i>
Future simple	They <i>won't</i> be late, <i>will they?</i>
Future continuous	He <i>won't be studying</i> tonight, <i>will he?</i>

Modals	She <i>can't</i> speak Arabic, <i>can she</i> ?
Modals	They <i>mustn't</i> come early, <i>must they</i> ?

2. Grammar Reference: Modal verbs of obligation and prohibition

Obligation

We use “***Have to***” to talk about rules and regulations.

Example: You ***have to show*** a student id card at the school gate.

Passengers ***have to bring*** their passport to a check-in counter to have it stamped.

We use “***Must***” when the obligation comes from the speaker. ***Must*** is never followed by to.

Example: I ***must*** renew my passport before I go on vacation.

He ***must return*** those reading books to the librarian no later than 3 days.

Prohibition

We use “***Must not / can't***” when the permission is not given.

Example: They ***must not*** drive without a valid driver's license.

We ***can't leave*** the suitcase unattended.

No obligation

We use “***Don't have to***” to talk about choice.

Example: Students ***don't have*** to wear school uniforms.

My brother ***doesn't have*** to join the military force.

Recommendation

We use “***Should / shouldn't***” for giving recommendation.

Example: You ***should visit*** the doctor and have your health checked.

Children ***shouldn't sleep*** late at night.

3. Grammar Reference: Factual conditional with *if/when/unless/as soon as*

We use “*if + simple present + will / can / should / may*” to talk about *real possibilities / imaginary situations* in the future.

Example: *If it doesn't rain, I will go* to the fitness center.

If she gets a scholarship to South Korea, *she should pick up* the language.

Unless means *if not*.

Example: *Unless* he is very ill, he will be at work.

I will be there at nine *unless* the train is late.

We use “*when*” to show the situation is 100% certain.

Example: *When I get up tomorrow*, I will go jogging in a park.

(It is certain that I will get up tomorrow.)

We use “*as soon as*” to emphasize that an event happens immediately.

Example: *As soon as* you walk into the shop, you will smell bread and coffee.

I will tell him *as soon* as I see him.

We use “*If + simple present + simple present*” to talk about things that are always true.

Example: If he *has* spare time, he *goes* swimming. (a fact)

If you *don't drink* water for a month, you *die*.
(scientific fact)