



NDA/NA ENGLISH MASTERY SERIES

MODULE 14

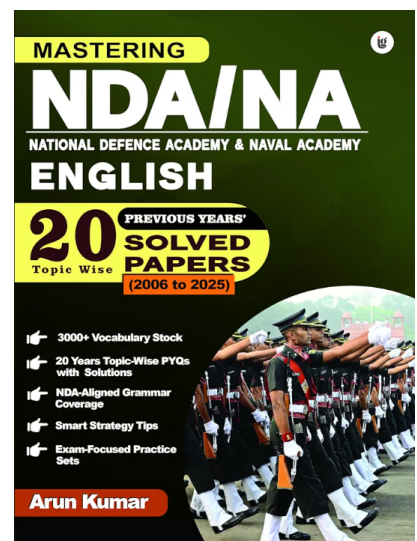
Question Tags

Question-tag rules and exam-focused practice with answer key.

From the book

MASTERING NDA/NA ENGLISH

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➤ Definition and Purpose

A question tag is a mini-question added to a statement to make it interactive or to confirm information. It is commonly used in conversations to engage the listener or verify the accuracy of a statement.

For example:

- It's a sunny day, isn't it? (Seeking agreement)
- You've finished your homework, haven't you? (Confirming information)

In competitive exams, question tags appear in multiple-choice questions, error detection, or sentence completion tasks, testing your grammatical precision.

➤ Formation of Question Tags

Forming a question tag involves four key steps:

- 1. Identify the Verb:**
 - Determine if the statement contains an auxiliary verb (e.g., is, have, will) or a main verb (e.g., play, eat).
 - If there's no auxiliary, use the appropriate form of "do" (do, does, did).
- 2. Determine Polarity:**
 - A positive statement takes a negative tag, and a negative statement takes a positive tag.
 - ✓ Positive: She is happy, isn't she?
 - ✓ Negative: She isn't sad, is she?
- 3. Match the Subject:**
 - Use a pronoun in the tag that agrees with the subject in number (singular/plural) and gender.
Example: The children are playing, aren't they?
- 4. Ensure Tense Agreement:**
 - The verb in the tag must match the tense of the statement.
Example: They visited the museum, didn't they?

➤ Key Rules

Here are the essential rules for forming question tags:

1. Auxiliary Verbs:

- Use the same auxiliary verb in the tag as in the statement.
 - ✓ Example: You can dance, can't you?
 - ✓ Example: She has arrived, hasn't she?

2. Main Verbs:

- For statements with only a main verb, use "do," "does," or "did" in the tag.
 - ✓ Example: He writes well, doesn't he?
 - ✓ Example: They ran fast, didn't they?

3. Polarity:

- Positive statement → Negative tag.
 - ✓ Example: We will succeed, won't we?
- Negative statement → Positive tag.

✓ Example: We won't fail, will we?

4. Subject Pronouns:

- The pronoun in the tag must match the subject.
 - ✓ Example: The girl is reading, isn't she?
 - ✓ Example: The boys are late, aren't they?

5. Special Cases:

- I am: Takes aren't I? (not "am I not").
 - ✓ Example: I am early, aren't I?
- Let's: Takes shall we? for suggestions.
 - ✓ Example: Let's go out, shall we?
- Imperatives: Use will you? or won't you? for commands/requests.
 - ✓ Example: Open the window, will you?
 - ✓ Example: Please sit down, won't you?
- Negative Adverbs: Words like "never," "hardly," "seldom" make the statement negative, so the tag is positive.

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✓ Example: She rarely speaks, does she?

- **There + Be:** Use "there" in the tag.

✓ Example: There is enough food, isn't there?

Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Below are frequent errors and their corrections:

1. Incorrect Auxiliary:

- Wrong: She is running, doesn't she?
- Correct: She is running, isn't she?
- Tip: Always use the same auxiliary as in the statement.

2. Mismatched Polarity:

- Wrong: You are ready, are you?
- Correct: You are ready, aren't you?
- Tip: Ensure the tag is opposite in polarity.

3. Wrong Pronoun:

- Wrong: The girls are here, aren't he?
- Correct: The girls are here, aren't they?

- Tip: Match the pronoun to the subject's number and gender.

4. Tense Disagreement:

- Wrong: They went home, don't they?
- Correct: They went home, didn't they?
- Tip: Use the same tense in the tag.

5. Misusing "I am":

- Wrong: I am tired, am I not?
- Correct: I am tired, aren't I?

Tip: Memorize aren't I? for "I am"

Special Cases in Question Tag

Rule 1

If the sentence is affirmative, the question tag must be negative.

Examples:

- She sings beautifully, doesn't she?
- You are very kind, aren't you?
- He will join us tomorrow, won't he?
- I am a bit late, aren't I?

Rule 2

If the sentence is negative, the question tag must be affirmative.

Examples:

- She does not play cricket, does she?
- You are not sleepy, are you?
- He didn't complete the work, did he?
- They weren't at home, were they?

Rule 3

Sentences containing negative words like *no*, *never*, *none*, *nobody*, *nothing*, *few*, *little*, *hardly*, *rarely*, *scarcely*, *seldom* are considered negative. Hence, the tag must be affirmative.

Examples:

- We had no chance to win, had we?
- Nobody knows the truth, do they?
- Few players performed well, did they?
- Seldom does he visit his relatives, does he?

Note on Few / Little

- *A few / a little* → positive meaning → sentence is affirmative → tag is negative.
- *Few / little* → negative meaning → sentence is negative → tag is affirmative.

Examples:

- I have a little sugar left, haven't I?
- She owns a few good books, hasn't she?

- He has little hope of success, has he?
- They made few mistakes, did they?

Rule 4

Affirmative imperative sentences (commands, requests, instructions) generally take the tag "will you?" or "won't you?".

Examples:

- Pass me the salt, will you?
- Close the gate, won't you?
- Please bring me some water, will you?
- Do help me with this bag, won't you?

Rule 5

Negative imperative sentences (prohibitions) always take an affirmative tag (will you?).

Examples:

- Don't touch that wire, will you?
- Don't make excuses, will you?
- Don't be late again, will you?
- Don't waste your time, will you?

Rule 6

Affirmative imperative sentences that express urgency or emphasis generally take the tag "won't you?"

Examples:

- Hurry up, won't you?
- Remember my words, won't you?
- Be careful while driving, won't you?
- Stay here until I return, won't you?

Rule 7

Imperative sentences expressing polite requests may take the tags "can't you?" or "won't you?"

Examples:

- Lend me your pen, will you?
- Speak a little louder, can't you?

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- Wait for a moment, won't you?
- Help the old man, can't you?

Rule 8

When an imperative sentence begins with "Let's" (suggestion/proposal), the tag is always "shall we?"

Examples:

- Let's go out for dinner, shall we?
- Let's take a break, shall we?
- Let's discuss the matter, shall we?
- Let's finish the project today, shall we?

Rule 9

If an imperative sentence begins with let me / let him / let her / let them, the question tag is "will you?"

Examples:

- Let me try this once, will you?
- Let him explain the problem, will you?
- Let her handle the situation, will you?
- Let them join the game, will you?

Rule 10

When the sentence contains "used to", the question tag can be "didn't" or "usedn't."

Examples:

- He used to play football, didn't he?
- She used to visit us often, usedn't she?
- They used not to smoke, did they?
- We used to go fishing, didn't we?

Rule 11

When dare or need functions as a marginal auxiliary verb, the tag is formed using the same auxiliary.

Examples:

- You need not worry, need you?
- He daren't argue with his father, dare he?
- She needn't wait here, need she?
- They daren't cross the line, dare they?

Rule 12

When dare or need is used as a main verb, the question tag follows the normal auxiliary pattern.

Examples:

- He dares to speak the truth, doesn't he?
- She needs your advice, doesn't she?
- We needed more time, didn't we?
- They dared to protest, didn't they?

Special Notes

- Negative tags use contracted forms: *isn't*, *don't*, *won't*, *can't*, *hasn't*.
- With "I am," the negative tag is "**aren't I?**" (not *amn't I*).
- For the sentence "I am your friend," the affirmative tag is "**am I?**"

Selecting the Subject of Question

Rule 1

If the subject is a personal pronoun, it is repeated in the tag.

Examples:

- He plays well, doesn't he?
- You like tea, don't you?
- They are waiting, aren't they?
- We finished early, didn't we?

Rule 2

If the subject is a noun, the equivalent pronoun is used in the tag according to number, gender, and person.

Examples:

- Ramesh is a doctor, isn't he?
- Priya has a new phone, hasn't she?
- The tree was tall, wasn't it?
- The students were tired, weren't they?

Rule 3

If the subject is *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*, *it*, *one*, the corresponding pronoun is used in the tag.

Examples:

- This is my bag, isn't it?
- That is your car, isn't it?
- These are my books, aren't they?
- Those were your shoes, weren't they?

Rule 4

If the subject is *someone*, *everyone*, *somebody*, *nobody*, *anybody*, the pronoun used in the tag is always *they*.

Examples:

- Someone has called you, haven't they?
- Everybody is ready, aren't they?
- Nobody knows the answer, do they?
- Anybody can solve this puzzle, can't they?

Rule 5

If the subject is *everything*, *something*, *anything*, *nothing*, the pronoun used in the tag is always *it*.

Examples:

- Everything is fine, isn't it?
- Nothing went wrong, did it?
- Something is missing, isn't it?
- Anything can happen, can't it?

Rule 6

When the subject of a sentence is expressed using phrases such as *all of us/you/them*, *none of us/you/them*, *one of us/you/them*, *anyone of us/you/them*, *some of us/you/them*, *most of us/you/them*, *either of us/you/them*, *neither of us/you/them*, or *everyone of us/you/them*, the question tag takes the pronoun **WE**, **YOU**, or **THEY** according to the meaning of the subject.

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Examples:

- All of us should work together, shouldn't we?
- Most of you were present yesterday, weren't you?
- Neither of them has arrived yet, have they?
- Everyone of us can improve with practice, can't we?

QUICK REVISION TABLE		
Statement Type	Tag	Examples
Affirmative	Negative	She is honest. She is honest, isn't she?
Negative	Affirmative	He isn't ready. He isn't ready, is he?
Negative words (<i>never, no, nobody, few, little, hardly, scarcely, rarely, seldom</i>)	Affirmative	She never complains. She never complains, does she?
Command	will you?	Close the door. Close the door, will you?
Negative command	will you?	Don't make noise. Don't make noise, will you?
Polite request	can't you? / won't you? / will you?	Help me. Help me, can't you? Wait here. Wait here, won't you?
Let's (Suggestion)	shall we?	Let's begin the meeting. Let's begin the meeting, shall we?
Let me / him / her / them	will you?	Let her speak. Let her speak, will you?
I am	aren't I?	I am your friend. I am your friend, aren't I?
I am not	am I?	I am not disturbing you. I am not disturbing you, am I?
Used to	didn't...? / usedn't...?	He used to play cricket. He used to play cricket, didn't he?
Need / Dare (Auxiliary)	need...? / dare...?	You needn't worry. You needn't worry, need you?
Need / Dare (Main Verb)	do/does/did	She needs your help. She needs your help, doesn't she?

Practice Set: Question Tags

Directions: Each sentence contains a statement or command that requires a suitable question tag. Your task is to supply the correct question tag based on the sentence type, verb form, and meaning. Pay close attention to helping verbs, pronouns, and negative or affirmative structure.

Practice Set 1

1. She is writing an exciting new novel that she hopes to publish soon, _____?
2. They didn't complete the project on time despite several reminders, _____?
3. I am to blame for the misunderstanding that happened during the meeting, _____?
4. Let's go for a hike in the hills before it gets too hot, _____?
5. Rarely had she seen such a breathtaking view from the mountaintop, _____?
6. He had finished the entire task before lunch was even served, _____?
7. The children are playing outside in the garden quite noisily, _____?
8. Open the door slowly so that you don't wake the baby, _____?
9. He seldom forgets his lines even during the longest performances, _____?
10. There are enough seats for everyone who has registered, _____?
11. You should apologize to the teacher for your rude behavior, _____?
12. None of them agreed to the revised proposal during the discussion, _____?
13. The movie we watched last night was absolutely thrilling, _____?
14. Nobody attended the seminar that was held over the weekend, _____?
15. Nothing can be done now to change the outcome of the exam, _____?
16. Don't be late for the presentation that begins at nine, _____?
17. Let's not argue about matters that are already resolved, _____?
18. You'd rather not go out when it's raining this heavily, _____?
19. Each of the players has a locker assigned in the main dressing room, _____?
20. You were studying last night until midnight for the final exam, _____?
21. They have just arrived at the hotel after a long journey, _____?
22. The car is fast enough to compete in this year's race, _____?
23. He never complains even when given the toughest assignments, _____?

24. There used to be a cinema at the corner of this street, _____?
25. If he had worked harder throughout the year, he could have passed, _____?

Practice Set 2

1. We are attending the international conference in Delhi next week, _____?
2. He paints skillfully even under tight time constraints, _____?
3. She doesn't trust strangers easily, especially in unfamiliar places, _____?
4. The speech she delivered at the seminar was truly inspiring, _____?
5. Let us begin the task before the supervisor arrives, _____?
6. Submit the report now so that we can review it in time, _____?
7. He never speaks to strangers, no matter how friendly they seem, _____?
8. There was a significant mistake in the final report submitted, _____?
9. No one knows the answer to the question she asked, _____?
10. She has finished her homework and even revised twice, _____?
11. Let's watch a movie tonight if we finish dinner early, _____?
12. She dances beautifully whenever she performs on stage, _____?
13. Someone should take responsibility for the scheduling error, _____?
14. Nothing went wrong during the event despite the bad weather, _____?
15. The committee meets on Mondays to discuss ongoing matters, _____?
16. The students were discussing the topic in detail during lunch, _____?
17. The book you read last month was truly fascinating, _____?
18. He'd better call her mother before things get worse, _____?
19. Turn off the lights when you leave the conference room, _____?
20. She rarely visits her hometown unless it's an emergency, _____?

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21. The children are playing outside near the fountain in the courtyard, _____?
22. Nobody objected to the decision taken by the board, _____?
23. She'd rather stay home than attend such a boring event, _____?
24. Neither of the answers you gave is correct in this context, _____?
25. She is writing a letter to her cousin who lives in Australia, _____?

Answer Key

Practice Set 1

1. isn't she?
Subject is positive, so the tag is negative using the auxiliary is.
2. did they?
Negative main clause, so use positive tag with did (past simple).
3. aren't I?
Exception: "I am" takes aren't I? in tags.
4. shall we?
Imperative with "Let's" takes shall we? as tag.
5. had she?
Inversion with "Rarely had..." — use had in positive tag.
6. hadn't he?
Positive clause with past perfect, so use hadn't.
7. aren't they?
Present continuous with plural subject — use are in tag.
8. will you?
Imperative sentence — general rule uses will you?.
9. does he?
"Seldom" implies negative — use does in positive tag.
10. aren't there?
Use there in both clause and tag.
11. shouldn't you?
Modal should remains in the tag; positive clause → negative tag.
12. did they?
"None" is treated as plural here. Negative clause → positive tag.
13. wasn't it?
Past tense passive — use was with it.
14. did they?
"Nobody" is negative — use did in positive tag.
15. can it?
"Nothing" is negative — use can in positive tag.
16. will you?
Negative imperative — general rule uses will you?.
17. shall we?
Imperative with "Let's not" still uses shall we?.
18. would you?
"Would rather not" is negative — use would in positive tag.
19. hasn't they?
"Each of" takes singular verb here — present perfect → has.
20. weren't you?
Past continuous — use were with subject "you".
21. haven't they?
Present perfect — auxiliary have stays in tag.

22. isn't it?
Present simple verb "is" — use isn't for positive clause.
23. does he?
"Never" is negative — positive tag with does.
24. didn't there?
"Used to be" takes did in the tag. "There" repeats.
25. Couldn't he
Conditional clause — tag formed from main clause auxiliary.

Practice Set 2

1. aren't we?
Present continuous — positive clause → negative tag with are.
2. doesn't he?
Present simple with adverb — tag uses does.
3. does she?
Negative clause — positive tag with does.
4. wasn't it?
Past passive — tag takes was with subject it.
5. shall we?
Imperative "Let us" — always takes shall we?.
6. will you?
Imperative sentence — standard tag is will you?.
7. does he?
"Never" is negative — positive tag with does.
8. wasn't there?
"There was" — tag repeats there and uses wasn't.
9. do they?
"No one" is negative — use positive tag with do.
10. hasn't she?
Present perfect — tag uses has.
11. shall we?
"Let's" imperative — tag is shall we?.
12. doesn't she?
Present simple with adverb — tag uses does.
13. shouldn't they?
Modal should in main clause — negative tag.
14. did it?
"Nothing" is negative — tag becomes positive with did.
15. doesn't it?
Present simple third person — use does in negative tag.
16. weren't they?
Past continuous — use were with plural subject.
17. wasn't it?
Past simple — tag uses was for singular subject.
18. hadn't he?
"He'd better" → modal had better takes hadn't.
19. will you?
Imperative — general rule uses will you?.

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20. does she?

"Rarely" is negative — use positive tag with does.

21. aren't they?

Present continuous with plural subject — are in negative tag.

22. did they?

"Nobody" is negative — tag becomes positive with did.

23. Wouldn't she?

"She'd rather" = would rather — tag uses would.

24. is it?

"Neither" is negative — use positive tag with is.

25. isn't she?

Present continuous — positive clause → negative tag with is.

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