



Class Notes

English Class 11

English Lessons with Stephanie



What are tag questions?

Short yes-no questions at the end of a non-question sentence

Regular Questions

Verb + Subject ?

- **Do you** speak English?
- **Is she** your cousin?

Tag Questions

Subject-Verb sentence, **verb + subject?**

- You speak English, **don't you?**
- She's your cousin, **isn't she?**

The meaning of most tag questions is: **Is that right?**

How do we make tag questions?

Go from negative → positive

Negative → Positive

- You don't eat meat, **do you?**
- She wasn't there, **was she?**
- It's not raining, **is it?**

Let's Practice

Make tag questions at the ends of these sentences

1. You're not serious, _____ ?
2. Penguins can't fly, _____ ?
3. Sharon wasn't here last week, _____ ?
4. The children aren't awake, _____ ?
5. He didn't leave yet _____ ?
6. It won't* snow tonight, _____ ? **(won't = will not)*
7. I'm not late, _____ ?
8. My father isn't here, _____ ?

Let's Practice

Make tag questions at the ends of these sentences

1. You're not serious, **are you** ?
2. Penguins can't fly, **can they** ?
3. Sharon wasn't here last week, **was she** ?
4. The children aren't awake, **are they** ?
5. He didn't leave yet, **did he** ?
6. It won't* snow tonight, **will it** ? **(won't = will not)*
7. I'm not late, **am I** ?
8. My father isn't here, **is he** ?

How do we make tag questions?

Going from positive → negative, make a contraction

- Positive → Negative

- They live here, **don't they?**

(do they not?)

- He can do it, **can't he?**

(can he not?)

- She's angry, **isn't she?**

(is she not?)

- You're winning, **aren't you?**

(are you not?)

- They called you, **didn't they?**

(did they not?)

- We will be late, **won't we?**

(will we not?)

- I'm your best friend, **aren't I?***

(am I not?)*

Let's Practice

Make tag questions at the ends of these sentences

1. You're Diego's uncle, _____ ?
2. They can come early, _____ ?
3. Miri was sick last week, _____ ?
4. Elephants can swim, _____ ?
5. He made breakfast, _____ ?
6. They'll win the game, _____ ?
7. I already told you about it, _____ ?

Let's Practice

Make tag questions at the ends of these sentences

1. You're Diego's uncle, **aren't you** ?
2. They can come early, **can't they** ?
3. Miri was sick last week, **wasn't she** ?
4. Elephants can swim, **can't they** ?
5. He made breakfast, **didn't he** ?
6. They'll win the game, **won't they** ?
7. I already told you about it, **didn't I** ?

When do we use tag questions?

When we are unsure

- Mary is good at math...**isn't she?**
- They know how to do it... **don't they?**

To invite others to share an opinion

- That was a terrible game...**wasn't it?**
- I just love doughnuts...**don't you?**

Let's Practice

Make tag questions

1. That house is really ugly... _____ ?
2. Our boss is so unfair... _____ ?
3. These shoes are so expensive... _____ ?
4. I hate getting up early... _____ ?
5. She'll help me... _____ ?
6. You can drive... _____ ?
7. It's getting late. I'm so tired... _____ ?

Let's Practice

Make tag questions

1. That house is really ugly... **isn't it** ?
2. Our boss is so unfair... **isn't he/she** ?
3. These shoes are so expensive... **aren't they** ?
4. I hate getting up early... **don't you** ?
5. She'll help me... **won't she** ?
6. You can drive... **can't you** ?
7. It's getting late. I'm so tired... **aren't you** ?

Review

- Tag questions are used with yes-no statements
- Tag questions go negative → positive, or positive → negative (with a contraction)
- Tag questions are used to confirm an idea, or invite an opinion

Ideas to Listen for

Basic comprehension

1. What is small talk?
2. According to this passage, what are common topics for small talk?
3. True or False: Small talk is important in all countries.
4. What is the purpose of small talk?

When I taught in a school, we started class every morning with a few minutes of small talk. We'd talk about our 1) _____, the weather, or some small piece of news. While some students enjoyed making small talk, some felt it was a waste of time. I was 2) _____ by how many students told me that in their countries, people don't *do* small talk. "Small talk is pointless," they would complain. "It's so 3) _____ to talk about the weather." Moreover, they told me it was extremely uncommon to strike up a 4) _____ with a complete stranger.

Small talk, however, is not just talking about the
5) _____ . And it doesn't have to be boring.

While it's true that polite small talk usually avoids
controversial topics like 6) _____ and religion,
good small talk can be a pleasant way to pass time.

Here, in the U.S., small talk is how we get to know our
neighbors, our 7) _____ , and the people in our
communities. Because it's not polite here to ask a lot of
personal questions, we often start 8) _____
with small talk.

While weather is a 9) _____ way to start a conversation, it's not the only way. In fact, talking about the weather often leads to a dead end very quickly. We start (or continue) conversations by remarking on accessories (Those are 10) _____ sneakers! Where did you get them?), voicing an opinion and inviting others to agree or 11) _____ (That was a waste of time, wasn't it?), or just 12) _____ an innocuous question (How old is your son?).

When initiating a conversation, starting with small talk also allows us to size someone up. Do they nod **13)** _____, then look away? Or do they smile and make eye contact? Do they prolong the conversation by asking questions? Or do they simply shrug and **14)** _____? Much of what we communicate comes from **15)** _____ language that, while silent, is more easily observed when talking. This is why we engage in small talk not just with strangers, but with co-workers, family members, and before **16)** _____ meetings. It's a way to see how people are feeling without asking them directly.

Sometimes small talk is just a brief exchange with a 17) _____ that doesn't go anywhere, but sometimes we go deeper. Once we feel comfortable, we reveal 18) _____ information about ourselves without being 19) _____. We talk about our families, our work, our opinions, and our feelings.

I got to know one of my closest friends while
20)_____ the train home from school. I met
another friend while we were 21)_____ walking
our dogs. My husband met one of his best friends in a
coffee shop, just talking about the city. Just like many
conversations, most 22)_____ start out small.

Whether you love it or hate it, small talk is part of American culture. If you live in a place where you regularly see other people, you will often find yourself in situations where making 23)_____ conversation is expected. So try 24)_____ some small talk. Who knows? You just might make a new friend.

This Lesson

Vocabulary Set 11

a waste of time

pointless

strike up a

conversation

avoid

controversial

dead end

remark

agree

innocuous

initiate

nod

shrug

body language

prolong

make eye contact

observe

brief

reveal

phrasal verbs

size up

start out

try out

a waste of time

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
a waste of time (c)	waste (vt)	wasteful wasted	wastefully	a waste of space a waste of energy/effort What a waste!

meaning: time spent doing something unuseful or unimportant

While some students enjoyed making small talk, some felt it was a waste of time.

Are video games a waste of time?

I wasted two hours waiting for my friend, and she never showed up.

pointless

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
point (c)		pointless	pointlessly	get to the point = get to the purpose or most important part

meaning: without a purpose

“Small talk is pointless,” they would complain.

The point of this lesson is to teach vocabulary and writing skills.

She didn't waste any time with small talk and got right to the point of the meeting: she was quitting.

strike up a conversation

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
conversation (c)	strike (vt) <i>struck, struck</i>			

meaning: start talking with someone

Moreover, they told me it was extremely uncommon to strike up a conversation with a complete stranger.

I'd like to strike up a conversation with that guy, but I don't know what to say!

We struck up a conversation and found out that we both went to the same university five years ago!

avoid

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
avoidance (nc)	avoid (vt)	avoidable unavoidable	unavoidably	

meaning: try to not go near

While it's true that polite small talk usually avoids controversial topics like politics and religion, good small talk can be a pleasant way to pass time.

I try to avoid milk because it makes my stomach upset.

Math class is unavoidable. You have to pass math in order to graduate from this school.

controversial

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
controversy (c, nc)		controversial	controversially	

meaning: causing argument or disagreement

While it's true that polite small talk usually avoids controversial topics like politics and religion, good small talk can be a pleasant way to pass time.

The new law is very controversial.

The controversy over outdoor dining continued well into the pandemic.

dead end

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
dead end (c)	dead-end (vi)			come to a dead end meet a dead end reach a dead end

meaning: place where there is no way to go
anywhere else

In fact, talking about the weather often leads to a
dead end very quickly.

The project will dead-end once it runs out of money.

My English skills reached a dead end when I
stopped taking classes.

remark

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
remark (c)	remark (vi, vt)	remarkable (amazing)	remarkably (very)	

meaning: comment, say

We start (or continue) conversations by remarking on things (Those are cool sneakers!).

The politician's remarks about guns were very controversial.

She remarked that she had never heard of that movie.

agree

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
agreement (c, nc)	agree (vi, vt)	agreeable	agreeably	agree to + verb agree about/over + noun in agreement
disagreement (c, nc)	disagree (vi, vt)	disagreeable	disagreeably	disagree to + verb disagree about/over + noun in disagreement

meaning: to have the same opinion or thought

We start conversations by voicing an opinion and inviting others to agree or disagree (That was a waste of time, wasn't it?).

My brother and I had a disagreement about/over which team would win.

I agreed to help my friend study for her test.

innocuous

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
		innocuous	innocuously	

meaning: harmless, innocent, not controversial

We start (or continue) conversations by asking an innocuous question (How old is your son?).

My father made some innocuous jokes about me at my wedding.

Don't worry about these innocuous weeds. They won't hurt anything.

initiate

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
initiation (c, nc)	initiate (vt, vi)	initial	initially	

meaning: start

When initiating a conversation, starting with small talk also allows us to size someone up.

The beginning of this course can be difficult. Initially, many students want to give up and try something easier.

I had to redo my initial plan when I realized I didn't have enough time.

nod

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
nod (c)	nod (vi)			nod one's head nod off (to fall asleep) shake one's head (opposite)

meaning: move one's head up and down to show agreement or understanding

Do they nod politely, then look away?

When I asked if they understood, everyone nodded.

I waved at him, and he gave me a quick nod.

shrug

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
shrug (c)	shrug (vi)			shrug one's shoulders

meaning: move one's shoulders up to show not caring or not knowing

Or do they simply shrug and agree?

When I asked what time we should leave, she shrugged.

He gave me a shrug when I asked his opinion.

body language

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
body language (nc)				

meaning: the position and movements of one's body

Much of what we communicate comes from body language that, while silent, is more easily observed when talking.

I could tell from her body language that she was lying.

His body language shows how confident he is.

prolong

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
	prolong (vt)	prolonged		

meaning: make something longer in time

Do they prolong the conversation by asking questions?

I don't want to prolong this problem. Let's solve it today.

Their prolonged disagreement ruined the party.

make eye contact

noun	verb	other
eye contact (nc)	make eye contact (start)	maintain eye contact (continue)

meaning: look someone else in the eyes

Or do they smile and make eye contact?

It's important to make eye contact when you shake someone's hand.

She made eye contact with everyone in the audience.

observe

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
observation (nc, c) observatory (c)	observe (vi, vt)	observant	observantly	

meaning: watch

Much of what we communicate comes from body language that, while silent, is more easily observed when talking.

The teacher observed her students while they wrote.

He's very observant; he notices many details that others miss.

brief

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
briefing	brief (vt)	brief	briefly	

meaning: quick (in time)

Sometimes small talk is just a brief exchange with a stranger that doesn't go anywhere, but sometimes we go deeper.

I don't know her well. We only met briefly.

Do you have a minute to brief me on what happened during yesterday's meeting?

reveal

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
reveal (c)	reveal (vt)	revealing	revealingly	reveal a secret

meaning: show, expose

Once we feel comfortable, we reveal personal information about ourselves without being asked.

Don't reveal your password to anyone.

It's not appropriate to wear revealing clothes to a funeral.

size up

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
	size up <i>(separable, vt)</i>			also: go one size larger

meaning: measure, assess, try to find more information about

When initiating a conversation, starting with small talk also allows us to size someone up.

The lion sized up the giraffe before attacking.

I chatted with my brother's new girlfriend to size her up.

separable phrasal verbs

with pronouns

pick up

pick **it** up

~~pick up it~~

point out

point **them** out

~~point out them~~

with nouns

pick up

pick **English** up

pick up **English**

point out

point **the birds** out

point out **the birds**

start out

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
	start out (vi) start out (separable, vt)			start off

meaning: begin from the beginning (the first part)

Just like many conversations, most relationships start out small.

When I wanted to learn the piano, I started out by taking lessons.

At school, we started out every morning with attendance.

try out

noun	verb	adjective	adverb	other
tryout (c)	try out <i>(separable, vt)</i>			slang: test drive

meaning: give a chance

So try out some small talk.

I didn't think I would like this class, but I tried it out and loved the teacher.

Tryouts for the football team start Monday.

separable phrasal verbs

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