

THE FLATMATES

Language point:
Negative questions
in conversations



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Negative questions at the end of sentences

In everyday conversations, English speakers sometimes use negative questions at the end of sentences, especially when they are giving their opinions.

Janet says:

'Fine jewellery looks so lovely on a man, **don't you agree?**'

Tim says:

'...it's important to have the latest model, **isn't that so?**'

This type of question helps to keep the conversation going by inviting the listener to agree with the speaker, or to give their own opinion.

Other questions which have this function are:

... **don't you think?**

... **don't you think so?**

... **isn't that right?**

... **wouldn't you agree?**

Replying to negative questions

The speaker does not have to give a direct answer to this type of question, but usually responds to the **idea** behind the question.

When Janet says:

'Fine jewellery looks so lovely on a man, **don't you agree?**'

Tim's answer is:

'In that case, let me show you these cuff-links.'

Sometimes the speaker will give a direct reply to the question.

When Tim says:

'...it's important to have the latest model, **isn't that so?**'

Janet's answer is:

'Not necessarily. I always say that style is more important than fashion.'

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Vocabulary:

cuff

the thicker material at the end of the sleeves of a shirt, near the hand

cuff-links

small decorated objects which are used instead of buttons to fasten cuffs. Cuff links are usually worn by men

a tie-clip

a piece of jewellery that holds a man's tie in place

style

an elegant, luxurious and often expensive way of living and dressing

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