

Language Links

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SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

Before you listen

🔊 Think about the topic of the text you are going to listen to. What do you already know about it? What could possibly be the content of the text? Which words come to mind that you already know? Which words would you want to look up?

🔊 If you have to do a task on the listening text, check whether you have understood the task correctly.

🔊 Think about what type of text you are going to listen to. What do you know about this type of text?

🔊 Relax and make yourself ready to pay attention to the listening text.

While you are listening

🔊 It is not necessary to understand every single word. Try to ignore those words that you think are less important anyway.

🔊 If there are words or issues that you don't understand, use your general knowledge as well as the context to find out the meaning.

🔊 If you still don't understand something, use a dictionary to look up the words or ask someone else for help.

🔊 Focus on key words and facts.

🔊 Take notes to support your memory.

🔊 Intonation and stress of the speakers can help you to understand what you hear.

🔊 Try to think ahead. What might happen next? What might the speakers say, which words might they use?

After listening

🔊 Think about the text again. Have you understood the main points?

🔊 Remember the speculations you made before you listened. Did they come true?

🔊 Review your notes.

🔊 Check whether you have completed your task correctly.

🔊 Have you had any problems while listening? Do you have any problems now to complete your task? Identify your problems and ask someone for help.

🔊 Listen again to difficult passages.

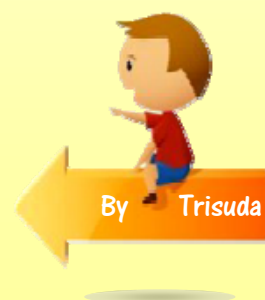
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Culture Corner

1. In which country are you expected to tip the waiter every time you go to a restaurant?

- A. Japan
- B. Germany
- C. Switzerland
- D. United States

2. In which countries is it considered extremely rude to arrive late to events, even by just a few minutes?

- A. Germany, Switzerland
- B. Spain, Greece
- C. India, Bangladesh
- D. Brazil, Argentina

4. Entrée refers to the appetizer in most countries, except for the United States, where it refers to...

- A. The main course
- B. The dessert
- C. Breakfast
- D. Snacks

3. In which country is the left hand considered dirty and you should avoid giving or receiving gifts with your left hand?

- A. Brazil
- B. Russia
- C. India
- D. China

5. In Spanish-speaking cultures, what does siesta refer to?

- A. A type of dance
- B. Rice with chicken and spices
- C. A midday nap taken after lunch
- D. Bull fighting

6. In China and Japan, sticking your chopsticks into your food should be avoided because...

- A. It means you are not hungry
- B. It represents incense sticks put on food given to the dead
- C. It means you did not enjoy the food
- D. It symbolizes going to hell

7. While in many Eastern Cultures, avoiding eye contact with your superiors is a sign of respect, in Western Cultures, avoiding eye contact is seen as a sign of...

- A. Aggression or hostility
- B. Affection or love
- C. Paying attention or focusing
- D. Lack of confidence or guilt



By Piyaporn

Answer Key: 1.D 2.A 3.C 4.A 5.C 6.B 7.D

Here's the Answer



What is a question tag? How are they formed? When do we use them?



A question tag is a short question added at the end of a statement. Let's see how they are formed.

Question tags are formed with the auxiliary or modal verb from the statement and the appropriate subject.

A positive statement is followed by a negative question tag.

- *Jack is from Spain, isn't he?*
- *Mary can speak English, can't she?*



A negative statement is followed by a positive question tag.

- *They aren't funny, are they?*
- *He shouldn't say things like that, should he?*

When the verb in the main sentence is in the present simple we form the question tag with do / does.

- *You play the guitar, don't you?*
- *Alison likes tennis, doesn't she?*

If the verb is in the past simple we use did.

- *They went to the cinema, didn't they?*
- *She studied in New Zealand, didn't she?*



When the statement contains a word with a negative meaning, the question tag needs to be positive

- *He hardly ever speaks, does he?*
- *They rarely eat in restaurants, do they?*

Some verbs / expressions have different question tags. For example:

I am - I am attractive, aren't I?

Positive imperative - *Stop daydreaming, will / won't you?*

Negative imperative - *Don't stop singing, will you?*

Let's - *Let's go to the beach, shall we?*

Have got (possession) - *He has got a car, hasn't he?*

This / that is - *This is Paul's pen, isn't it?*



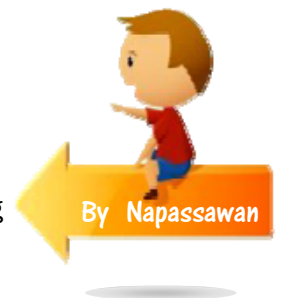
Intonation

When we are sure of the answer and we are simply encouraging a response, the intonation in the question tag goes down:

- *This is your car, isn't it?* (Your voice goes down when you say isn't it.)

When we are not sure and want to check information, the intonation in the question tag goes up:

- *He is from Chile, isn't he?* (Your voice goes up when you say isn't he?)



Bits and Pieces

Mooncakes



Mooncakes are traditional Chinese pastries generally eaten during the Mid-Autumn Festival. The festival typically involves the family getting together to share mooncakes while watching the moon.

Typical Chinese mooncakes are round in shape, and measure around 10 cm (4 inches) in diameter and 4-5 cm (2 inches) in thickness. Most mooncakes consist of a pastry skin enveloping a sweet, dense filling. Mooncakes are usually eaten in small wedges shared by family members. They are generally served with Chinese tea, and very rarely, mooncakes are served steamed or fried.



Mooncakes are the must-eat food for the Mid-Autumn Festival. It was customary for housewives to prepare mooncakes at home when the festival was approaching. However, as the production is labor-intensive and they are widely available in markets, very few people make them at home nowadays. The price of mooncakes usually ranges from \$ 10 (70 yuan) to \$ 50 (340 yuan) for a box of four. However, very expensive mooncakes have appeared recently with some reaching thousands of yuan for a box.

The History of Mooncakes



The custom of eating mooncakes has its origins in the uprising that ended the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). People in the Ming Dynasty that followed ate mooncakes every Mid-Autumn Festival to commemorate the uprising. Not everyone looks back to the Yuan Dynasty nowadays, with mooncakes more a representation of the full Mid-Autumn moon in people's minds, and something nice to eat with the family.

Traditional Mooncakes

Fillings

The types of filling vary according to the region's tradition. The most used fillings are as follows:

Lotus seed paste : It is made from dried lotus seeds. Lotus seed paste is considered by some people the most delicious and luxurious filling for mooncakes.

Sweet bean paste : There are several types of sweet bean paste: mung bean paste, red bean paste and black bean potato paste. Red bean paste is the most commonly used filling for mooncakes.

Five kernel : This filling consists of 5 types of nuts and seeds. The types of nuts and seeds vary according to different regions, but commonly used nuts and seeds include: walnuts, pumpkin seeds, watermelon seeds, peanuts, sesame seeds, and almonds.

Egg yolk: A whole salted egg yolk is placed in the center of mooncakes to symbolize the full moon.

Jujube paste: A sweet paste made from the ripe fruits of the jujube (date) plant. It is dark red in color.



Adapted from <http://www.chinahighlights.com/festivals/mooncake.htm>

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