Questions & Negatives

CEFR B2 · Precision in question forms, negation and emphasis

WS1 Question Tags & Negative Questions · WS2 Negation, Scope & Transfer · WS3 Negative Inversion · WS4 Analysis & Writing · Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Question Tags & Negative Questions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Reference: Tags Mirror the Main Clause

A question tag reverses the polarity of the main clause and copies its auxiliary. Positive statement → negative tag; negative statement → positive tag. Negative questions (*Didn't you…?*) usually express surprise or seek confirmation.

Statement	Tag	Note
You saw it,	**didn't you**?	positive → negative
She hasn't left,	**has she**?	negative → positive
I'm late,	**aren't I**?	irregular: *aren't I*
Let's go,	**shall we**?	fixed tag
Nobody called,	**did they**?	negative pronoun → positive tag

Part A – Add the Tag

1. They've already met, _____?
2. You didn't lock the door, _____?
3. She'd never been there before, _____?
4. Let's take a break, _____?
5. Nothing was broken, _____?
6. I'm next, _____?

Part B – Interpret the Negative Question

What does the speaker most likely mean? Write "surprise", "seeking agreement", or "polite offer".

#	Negative question	Function
1	"Haven't we met somewhere before?"	
2	"Wouldn't you like a cup of tea?"	
3	"Didn't you say you'd finished?"	
4	"Isn't this a lovely view?"	

Score: ____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Negation, Scope & Transfer

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Reference: Where the Negative Belongs

With verbs of thinking (*think, believe, suppose, expect*), English usually **transfers** the negative to the main verb: *I don't think he's coming* rather than *I think he isn't coming*. The **scope** of a negative also changes meaning — compare *not all* with *all … not*.

Form	Preferred / meaning
I don't think it'll rain.	standard — negative raised to *think*
I think it won't rain.	possible but marked / more emphatic
Not all students passed.	some did, some didn't
All students didn't pass.	ambiguous — avoid
He isn't necessarily right.	partial negation — maybe right, maybe not

Part A – Transfer the Negative

Rewrite in the more natural form.

1. I believe she isn't ready. → _____
2. I suppose they won't agree. → _____
3. I expect he hasn't heard. → _____

Part B – Scope & Meaning

Explain the difference in meaning between the two sentences in each pair.

#	Pair	Difference in meaning
1	a) Not everyone laughed. b) Everyone didn't laugh.	
2	a) I didn't go because I was tired. b) I didn't go, because I was tired.	
3	a) She can't be serious. b) She can't be too serious.	

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Negative Inversion

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Reference: Front a Negative, Invert the Verb

When a negative or restrictive adverbial is moved to the front for emphasis, the subject and auxiliary **invert**, exactly as in a question. This is a marker of formal and literary register.

Neutral	Inverted (emphatic / formal)
I had never seen such a mess.	**Never had I** seen such a mess.
She rarely complains.	**Rarely does she** complain.
He didn't realise until later.	**Not until later did he** realise.
They had no sooner sat down than…	**No sooner had they** sat down than…
You must not under any circumstances open it.	**Under no circumstances must you** open it.

Part A – Invert for Emphasis

Rewrite each sentence beginning with the fronted adverbial given.

1. I have never heard such nonsense. → Never _____.
2. We had hardly arrived when it started. → Hardly _____.
3. She little knew what awaited her. → Little _____.
4. You will not find a better deal anywhere. → Nowhere _____.
5. They realised the danger only then. → Only then _____.

Part B – Correct the Inversion

Each sentence attempts inversion but contains an error (missing/extra auxiliary, wrong order).

#	Wrong sentence	Correction
1	Never I had felt so proud.	
2	No sooner we had left than it rained.	
3	Rarely she does make mistakes.	
4	Not only he was late, but he forgot the tickets.	

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Analysis & Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B2 (CEFR)

Part A – Passage Analysis

> Not until the results were published did the committee grasp the scale of the problem. They had hardly begun their review when a second report arrived — one they could not, under any circumstances, ignore. "We didn't think the figures were reliable, did we?" the chair asked, though nobody answered. Rarely had a routine audit uncovered so much; never before had the board been forced to act so quickly.

1. Find the three examples of negative inversion. Rewrite each in neutral (non-inverted) order.
2. Identify the question tag and explain what it signals here.
3. The passage uses *couldn't … ignore* rather than *had to ignore*. Explain the effect of the negation.
4. Find one instance of negative transfer or raised negation and comment on it.

Part B – Extended Writing

Write 160–190 words in a formal register (a report, review, or dramatic narrative). You must include and underline: (1) at least two instances of **negative inversion**; (2) at least one **question tag**; (3) at least one **negative question**; (4) one example of **partial negation** (*not all / not necessarily*); (5) consistent register throughout.

#	Line
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

Features: _____ / 5 Word count: _____ Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — B2 Level, Questions & Negatives

Worksheet 1 – Part A

1 haven't they? · 2 did you? · 3 had she? · 4 shall we? · 5 was it? · 6 aren't I?

Item 5: *nothing* makes the clause negative, so the tag is positive. Item 6: the fixed irregular tag *aren't I* (not *amn't I*).

Worksheet 1 – Part B

1 seeking agreement / recognition · 2 polite offer · 3 surprise (challenging) · 4 seeking agreement

Worksheet 2 – Part A

1 I don't believe she's ready. · 2 I don't suppose they'll agree. · 3 I don't expect he's heard.

Worksheet 2 – Part B (model)

1 a) partial — some didn't laugh; b) ambiguous, often read as total (no one laughed) — best avoided. · 2 a) the reason is why I DID go elsewhere is denied — I went, but not for that reason; b) with the comma, I simply didn't go, and tiredness is the reason. · 3 a) it's impossible she means it; b) she is serious, but not excessively so (partial negation with *too*).

Worksheet 3 – Part A

1 Never have I heard such nonsense. · 2 Hardly had we arrived when it started. · 3 Little did she know what awaited her. · 4 Nowhere will you find a better deal. · 5 Only then did they realise the danger.

Worksheet 3 – Part B

1 Never had I felt so proud. · 2 No sooner had we left than it rained. · 3 Rarely does she make mistakes. · 4 Not only was he late, but he (also) forgot the tickets.

Worksheet 4 – Part A (model)

1 "Not until the results were published did the committee grasp…" → The committee did not grasp the scale until the results were published. / "Rarely had a routine audit uncovered so much" → A routine audit had rarely uncovered so much. / "never before had the board been forced…" → The board had never before been forced to act so quickly. · 2 Tag: "did we?" — a negative statement + positive tag; here rhetorical, inviting agreement rather than a real answer. · 3 "could not ignore" foregrounds obligation as the removal of a choice — more emphatic and formal than "had to". · 4 "We didn't think the figures were reliable" raises the negative to *think* (vs "we thought the figures weren't reliable"), softening the assertion.

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Inversion	Two or more correct negative inversions	0–5
Tags & negative Qs	Tag and negative question used with correct function	0–4
Scope / partial negation	Partial negation used precisely	0–3
Register & task	160–190 words; consistent formal/literary register	0–3