

Student worksheet: Spoken Grammar

Time for your language health-check. Find out how *Grammar Scan* can help you achieve greater accuracy. First do the diagnostic tests to check your knowledge. Then look at the extracts from *Practical English Usage* to fill in any gaps.

1. Choose the right question tag.

- A. They can all swim, (can't they, don't they)?
- B. They all speak German,(can't they, don't they)?
- C. You've brought the map, (didn't you, haven't you)?
- D. He's coming next month,..... (isn't he, doesn't he)?
- E. He comes every month,.....(isn't he, doesn't he)?
- F. You wanted to come with us,.....(didn't you, wouldn't you)?

2. Right or wrong?

- A. You never say what you're thinking, don't you? []
- B. He could never refuse a drink, couldn't he? []

(Upper Intermediate Test 24)

3. Back or again?

- A. I don't think she got your letter: you'd better write
- B. If I write to you every week, will you write?
- C. The bicycle you sold me is too small. Can I sell itto you?

4. Which of these sentences is/are correct?

- A. I stood up, and then **I sat back down**.
- B. I stood up, and then **I sat down again**.
- C. I'll be **back in the office** on Monday.
- D. I'll be **in the office again** on Monday.

(Advanced Test 28)

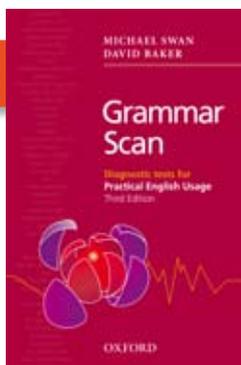
5. Which of these are natural in speech?

- A. I'll see you soon.
- B. Will see you soon.
- C. See you soon.

6. What does this text message mean?

Tx 4 a gr8 party cu @ bbq @ 9

(Expert Test 23 & 24)



Student answer sheet: Spoken Grammar

What are the results?

1. A. *can't they*
B. *don't they*
C. *haven't you*
D. *isn't he*
E. *doesn't he*
F. *didn't you*
(See PEU 487.3)

2. A. Wrong. Should be: *do you?*
B. Wrong. Should be *could he?*
(See PEU 487.4)

3. A. *again* B. *back* C. *back*
(See PEU 87)

4. All of them. (See PEU 87.4)

5. A and C (See PEU 179.2)

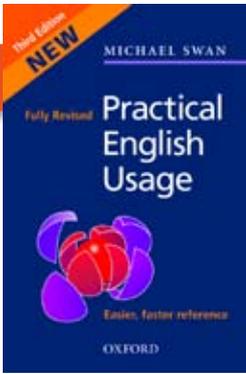
6. *Thanks for a great party. See you at the barbecue at 9.00*
(See PEU 147.4)

What's the diagnosis?

0-2 correct. It looks like you may still have a lot to learn. You will need to revise the basics in *Practical English Usage*.

2-4 correct. Not bad. You have a pretty high language level but there are some gaps. You will need to study some sections of *Practical English Usage*.

4-6 correct. Congratulations a very good command of English. Use *Grammar Scan* and *Practical English Usage* to check any tricky points that are still not clear.



Here's the treatment!

Spoken Grammar

487.3 auxiliaries

If the main sentence has an auxiliary verb (or non-auxiliary *be*), this is repeated in the question tag.

Sally **can** speak French, **can't** she?

The meeting's at ten, **isn't** it?

You **didn't** speak to Luke, **did** you?

You **wouldn't** like a puppy, **would** you?

If the main sentence has no auxiliary, the question tag has *do*.

You like oysters, **don't** you?

Harry gave you a cheque, **didn't** he?

487.4 negative words

Non-negative tags are used after sentences containing negative words like *never*, *no*, *nobody*, *hardly*, *scarcely* and *little*.

You **never** say what you're thinking, **do you?** (NOT . . . **don't you?**)

It's **no** good, is it? (NOT . . . **isn't it?**)

It's **hardly** rained at all this summer, **has it?**

There's **little** we can do about it, **is there?**

87 back and again

Back and *again* can be used with similar meanings, but there are some differences.

1 back with a verb

With a verb, we use *back* to suggest a return to an earlier situation, a movement in the opposite direction to an earlier movement, and similar ideas. *Again* is not normally used in this way with a verb.

Give me my watch **back**. (NOT ~~Give me my watch again.~~)

I'm taking this meat **back** to the shop. (NOT ~~I'm taking this meat to the shop again.~~)

2 again with a verb

With a verb, *again* usually suggests repetition. Compare:

– That was lovely. Can you play it **again**?

When I've recorded your voice I'll play it **back**.

– Eric was really bad-mannered. I'm never going to invite him **again**.

She comes to our parties but she never invites us **back**.

– I don't think he got your letter. You'd better write **again**.

If I write to you, will you write **back**?

Note the difference between **sell back** (to the same person) and **sell again**.

The bike you sold me is too small. Can I **sell it back** to you?

If we buy this house and then have to move somewhere else, how easy will it be to **sell it again**?

3 cases when back is not used

When the verb itself already expresses the idea of 'return to an earlier situation' or 'movement in the opposite direction', *back* is not generally used.

Stefan can never **return** to his country. (More natural than *Stefan can never return back . . .*)

Who opened the window? Could you **close** it, please? (NOT . . . ~~close it back~~ . . .)

However, *again* can be used to emphasise the idea of 'return'.

Stefan can never **return** to his country **again**.

Who opened the window? Could you **close** it **again**, please?

4 adverb particles etc

With adverb particles and prepositional phrases, we can use both *back* and *again* to suggest 'return to an earlier situation' etc.

I stood up, and then I sat **(back) down (again)**.

He tasted the apple and spat it **(back) out (again)**.

Go **(back) to sleep (again)**.

I'll be **(back) in the office (again)** on Monday

5 ring/call back

Note that *ring back* (BrE only) and *call back* can be used to mean both 'return a phone call' and 'repeat a phone call'.

She's not here just now. Ask her to **ring me back**. (= return my call)

I haven't got time to talk now. OK, I'll **ring back** later. (= ring again)

6 word order

Back is an adverb particle (see 20), and can usually go between a verb and its object, unless this is a pronoun (see 599.4). *Again* cannot.

Take **back your money** – *I don't want it.* (OR Take **your money back** . . .)

Count **the money again**, please. (NOT ~~Count again the money~~ . . .)

For other uses of *back* and *again*, see a good dictionary.

179 ellipsis (3): at the beginning of a sentence

2 unstressed forms of *be, will, would, have*

We do not usually drop words so as to begin sentences with unstressed forms of *be, will, would* or auxiliary *have* (though this sometimes happens in postcards, diary entries and other kinds of very informal writing).

I'm coming tomorrow. OR **Coming** tomorrow. (BUT NOT ~~Am coming tomorrow~~. *Am* is not stressed.)

I'll see you soon. OR **See** you soon. (BUT NOT ~~Will see you soon~~. *Will* is not stressed.)

Haven't seen him. (BUT NOT ~~Have seen him~~. *Have* is not stressed.)

147 correspondence: emails and text messages

txt msgs (text messages)

Text messages (sent for example by mobile phone) use a large number of abbreviations to save time and space. Words are shortened, often by leaving out vowels. Letters and numbers are used instead of words (or parts of words) that sound the same. Initial letters only are used for some common expressions. Some typical examples:

c u l8r

See you later.

r u cumin 2day?

Are you coming today?

tx 4 a gr8 party

Thanks for a great party.

just 2 let u no

Just to let you know.

wil u b hr Thu eve?

Will you be here Thursday evening?

RUOK?

Are you OK?

got ur msg

Got your message.

wil b @ bbq @ 9

Will be at barbecue at 9.

2 bsy atm, tlk l8r

Too busy at the moment, talk later.

if Uv tym, send pix o kids

If you have time, send pictures of kids.

need mo infmtn

Need more information.