NDA GAT • ENGLISH SYLLABUS REVISION NOTES

Question Tags & Modifiers

Core Grammar Rules, High-Frequency NDA Exceptions, Modifier Traps & NDA-Pattern Practice MCQs

Part 1: Question Tags (NDA English Rules)

A **question tag** is a short question added at the end of a statement to confirm information or seek agreement. In the NDA GAT English paper, question tags are tested in **Fill in the Blanks**, **Spotting Errors**, and **Sentence Improvement**.

Core Rules

1. **The Polarity Rule:** Positive statement → **Negative tag** (*He is a cadet, **isn't he?***). Negative statement → **Positive tag** (*He is not a cadet, **is he?***).
2. **Always use contractions** in negative tags (`isn't`, `aren't`, `won't`, `shan't`, `can't`, `don't`). Never write *is not he?*
3. **Same tense and auxiliary:** Match the helping verb of the main clause. If there is no helping verb (Simple Present/Past), use `do / does / did`.
   Examples: She plays chess, **doesn't she?** / They won the match, **didn't they?**
4. **Subject must be a pronoun:** Never use a noun in the tag (*Rohan is late, **isn't he?*** — not *isn't Rohan?*).

High-Frequency NDA Exceptions & Traps

Statement Type / Word	Rule for Question Tag	NDA Exam Example
I am (Positive)	Always takes `aren't I?` (never *amn't I?*)	I am right, **aren't I?**
I am not (Negative)	Takes `am I?`	I am not late, **am I?**
Semi-negative words *(hardly, scarcely, barely, seldom, rarely, never, little, few)*	Statement is treated as **negative** → use a **positive tag**	He seldom visits us, **does he?** There is little hope, **is there?**
A little / A few	Treated as **positive** → use a **negative tag**	A few cadets were present, **weren't they?**
Everyone, somebody, anyone, nobody, none	Takes plural pronoun `they` + plural verb	Everyone has arrived, **haven't they?** Nobody called, **did they?**
Everything, something, anything, nothing	Takes singular pronoun `it`	Nothing was lost, **was it?**

Statement Type / Word	Rule for Question Tag	NDA Exam Example
Let's (Let us)	Always takes `shall we?` (suggestion)	Let's go for a run, **shall we?**
Let me / him / her / them	Takes `will you?` (permission/request)	Let him speak, **will you?**
Imperatives ***(Orders / Requests)***	Positive → `will you?` / `won't you?` Negative → `will you?`	Open the door, **will you?** Don't make a noise, **will you?**
There is / There are	Retain `there` as the subject	There is a problem, **isn't there?**
This / That vs. These / Those	*This/That* → `it`; *These/Those* → `they`	That is your rifle, **isn't it?** Those are my boots, **aren't they?**
Used to	Takes `didn't`	He used to live in Pune, **didn't he?**
Collective Nouns	United → `it`; Divided → `they`	The jury gave its verdict, **didn't it?** The jury were divided, **weren't they?**

Part 2: Modifiers (NDA English Rules)

A **modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that describes, limits, or qualifies another word (adjectives, adverbs, participial phrases, or prepositional phrases).

> **The Golden Rule of Modifiers**
>
> Place every modifier as close as possible to the exact word it modifies. Whenever an introductory phrase ends in a comma, the noun immediately after the comma must be the logical doer of that phrase.

1. Dangling Modifiers (Highest Frequency in NDA)

A modifier "dangles" when an introductory phrase (usually starting with `V-ing`, `V3`, or `Having + V3`) has **no logical doer** immediately following the comma.

- **The Subject-Match Test:** The noun right after the comma **must** be the doer of the introductory phrase.
  Incorrect: **Walking through the park**, a snake bit him. *(Implies the snake was walking!)*
  Correct: **Walking through the park**, **he** was bitten by a snake.
- **The Weather / Time / Day Trap ("Being…"):**
  Incorrect: **Being a rainy day**, I stayed indoors. *(Implies "I" am a rainy day!)*
  Correct: **It** being a rainy day, I stayed indoors.

- **Past Participle Trap:**
  Incorrect: **Exhausted by the drill**, the bed looked inviting.
  Correct: **Exhausted by the drill**, **the cadet** found the bed inviting.

2. Misplaced Modifiers

A modifier is placed too far from the word it describes, creating an absurd or unintended meaning.

- **Limiting Modifiers (`only`, `just`, `almost`, `nearly`, `even`, `merely`):** Place them **immediately before** the word they limit.
  Ambiguous: He **only** wants ₹500. | **Precise:** He wants **only** ₹500.
  Incorrect: She **almost** failed every exam. *(Means she passed all!)* | **Correct:** She failed **almost** every exam.
- **Misplaced Phrases:**
  Incorrect: The officer handed a medal to the soldier **made of gold**. *(Soldier made of gold?)*
  Correct: The officer handed a medal **made of gold** to the soldier.

3. Squinting Modifiers

A modifier placed between two words so that it could modify either one, causing ambiguity.

- **Squinting:** Running uphill **quickly** builds stamina. *(Does "quickly" modify "running" or "builds"?)*
- **Clear:** Running uphill builds stamina **quickly**.

4. Adjective vs. Adverb Modifier Traps

- **Linking Verbs** (*look, seem, appear, feel, smell, taste, sound, become*) take **adjectives**, not adverbs.
  Correct: The soup tastes **good** (not *well*). / He feels **bad** (not *badly*).
- **Confusing Pairs:**
  Hard (with effort) vs. **Hardly** (scarcely/barely) → *He works **hard**. / He **hardly** works.*
  Late (after time) vs. **Lately** (recently) → *He arrived **late**. / I haven't seen him **lately**.*

Part 3: NDA Pattern Practice MCQs

Section A: Question Tags (Fill in the Blanks)

1. I am eligible for the NDA examination, _____?

(A) amn't I (B) aren't I (C) am I (D) isn't it

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2. Nobody in the platoon was aware of the sudden inspection, _____?

(A) was he (B) wasn't he (C) were they (D) weren't they

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3. She hardly ever misses her morning PT session, _____?

(A) doesn't she (B) does she (C) isn't she (D) did she

4. Let's revise the geography syllabus tonight, _____?

(A) will we (B) won't we (C) shall we (D) don't we

Section B: Modifiers (Spotting Errors)

Identify the segment (A, B, or C) that contains a grammatical error. Choose (D) if there is no error.

5. (A) Being a very hot day, / (B) all the cadets remained / (C) inside the barracks. / (D) No error.

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6. (A) Entering the dark room, / (B) a loud explosion / (C) startled the soldiers. / (D) No error.

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7. (A) He almost drank / (B) the entire bottle of water / (C) after the 10 km run. / (D) No error.

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8. (A) The newly prepared ration / (B) smells deliciously / (C) in the mess hall. / (D) No error.

Part 4: Answer Key & Explanations

Q. No.	Answer	NDA Grammar Rule & Explanation
1	**(B) aren't I**	Positive *I am* always takes *aren't I?*
2	**(C) were they**	*Nobody* is negative (needs a positive tag) and takes the plural pronoun *they* with a plural verb.
3	**(B) does she**	*Hardly* makes the statement negative, so it takes a positive tag in Simple Present.
4	**(C) shall we**	*Let's* (suggestion) always takes *shall we?*
5	**(A)**	Dangling modifier. Add the dummy subject **It** (*It being a very hot day*).
6	**(B)**	Dangling modifier (implies the explosion entered the room). Rewrite the second clause so *the soldiers* is the subject: *the soldiers were startled by a loud explosion*.
7	**(A)**	Misplaced limiting modifier. Move *almost* before *the entire bottle*: *He drank **almost** the entire bottle*.
8	**(B)**	*Smell* is a linking verb here and takes an adjective (**delicious**), not an adverb.