

Intonation Patterns

Falling Intonation (↘)

(The pitch of the voice falls at the end of the sentence.)

Falling intonation is the most common intonation pattern in English.

It is commonly found in statements, commands, wh-questions (information questions), confirmatory question tags and exclamations.

- **Statements**

- Nice to meet ↘ you.
- I'll be back in a ↘ minute.
- She doesn't live here ↘ anymore.
- Dad wants to change his ↘ car.
- Here is the weather ↘ forecast.
- Cloudy weather is expected at the end of the ↘ week.
- We should work together more ↘ often
- I'm going for a walk in the ↘ park.

- **Commands**

- Write your name ↘ here.
- Show me what you've ↘ written.
- Leave it on the ↘ desk.
- Take that picture ↘ down.
- Throw that ↘ out.
- Put your books on the ↘ table.
- Take your hands out of your ↘ pockets.

- **Wh- questions** (requesting information.)

(questions beginning with 'who', 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when', 'which', and 'how')

- What country do you come ↘ from?
- Where do you ↘ work?
- Which of them do you ↘ prefer?
- When does the shop ↘ open?
- How many books have you ↘ bought?
- Which coat is ↘ yours?
- Whose bag is ↘ this?

- **Questions Tags that are statements requesting confirmation rather than questions.**

Not all tag questions are really questions.

Some of them merely ask for confirmation or invite agreement, in which case we use a falling tone at the end.

- He thinks he's so clever, doesn't ↘ he?

- She's such a nuisance, isn't ↘ she?
 - He failed the test because he didn't revise, did ↘ he?
 - It doesn't seem to bother him much, does ↘ it?
- **Exclamations**
 - How nice of ↘ you!
 - That's just what I ↘ need!
 - You don't ↘ say!
 - What a beautiful ↘ voice!
 - That's a ↘ surprise!

Rising Intonation (↗)

(The pitch of the voice rises at the end of a sentence.)

Rising intonation invites the speaker to continue talking.

It is normally used with yes/no questions, and question tags that are real questions.

- **Yes/no Questions**
(Questions that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no'.)
 - Do you like your new ↗ teacher?
 - Have you finished ↗ already?
 - May I borrow your ↗ dictionary?
 - Do you have any ↗ magazines?
 - Do you sell ↗ stamps?
- **Questions tags that show uncertainty and require an answer** (real questions).
 - We've met already, ↗ haven't we?
 - You like fish, ↗ don't you?
 - You're a new student ↗ aren't you?
 - The view is beautiful, ↗ isn't it?

We sometimes use a combination of rising and falling intonation in the same sentence.

The combination is called Rise-Fall or Fall-Rise intonation.

Rise-Fall Intonation (↗↘)

(The intonation rises and then falls.)

We use rise-fall intonation for choices, lists, unfinished thoughts and conditional sentences.

- **Choices** (alternative questions.)
 - Are you having ↗ soup or ↘ salad?
 - Is John leaving on ↗ Thursday or ↘ Friday?
 - Does he speak ↗ German or ↘ French?
 - Is your name ↗ Ava or ↘ Eva?
- **Lists** (rising, rising, rising, falling)
Intonation falls on the last item to show that the list is finished.
 - We've got ↗ apples, pears, bananas and ↘ oranges
 - The sweater comes in ↗ blue, white pink and ↘ black
 - I like ↗ football, tennis, basketball and ↘ volleyball.
 - I bought ↗ a tee-shirt, a skirt and a ↘ handbag.
- **Conditional sentences**
(The tone rises in the first clause and falls gradually in the second clause.)
 - If he ↗ calls, ask him to leave a ↘ message.
 - Unless he ↗ insists, I'm not going to ↘ go.
 - If you have any ↗ problems, just ↘ contact us.

Fall-Rise Intonation (↘↗)

(The voice falls and rises *usually within one word*.)

The main function of fall-rise intonation is to show that the speaker is not certain of the answer they are giving to a question, or is reluctant to reply (as opposed to a falling tone used when there is no hesitation). It is also used in polite requests or suggestions.

- **Hesitation/reluctance:**
 - So you'd be willing to confirm that? ...Well ... I ↘sup↗pose so ...
 - You didn't see him on Monday? I don't quite ↘re↗member ...
- **Politeness-Doubt-Uncertainty:** (You are not sure what the answer might be.)
 - Perhaps we could ↘vis↗it the place?
 - Should we ↘cop↗y the list?
 - Do you think it's ↘al↗lowed?