ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION · DEEP DIVE

The Tunes of English

Falling, rising and fall-rise: the pitch patterns that tell a listener whether you have finished, whether you are asking, and whether you mean it, none of which the words themselves say.

B1 pronunciation intonation tone

fall ↘

Finished and certain: statements, wh-questions, commands.

Where do you LIVE? ↘

Please sit down and make yourself at home.

rise ↗

Open: yes-no questions, list items, polite requests.

Are you READY? ↗

We need bread, milk, cheese and butter.

fall-rise ↘↗

Reservation: there's a 'but' left unsaid.

It's very NICE... ↘↗

I'm not sure about that, to be honest.

SITUATION	TUNE	EXAMPLE
question tag, small talk	fall: expects agreement	Lovely day, **isn't it**? ↘
question tag, real question	rise: really asking	You locked it, **didn't you**? ↗
first part of a sentence	rise: more is coming	When I got **home**, ↗ ...
last part	fall: the end	... the door was **open**. ↘

1 Fall or rise?

Write fall or rise for the normal tune of each sentence.

1 Where do you live at the moment? _____

2 Are you ready to leave now? _____

3 Please sit down. _____

4 What a beautiful day! _____

5 Could you close the window, please? _____

6 I'm going to the shops now. _____

7 You saw her? Are you sure? _____

8 Lovely day, isn't it? (small talk) _____

9 You locked the door, didn't you? (not sure) _____

10 How much does it cost? _____

2 What does the tune say?

Write fall, rise or fall-rise.

1 "It's very nice..." (but I don't really like it) _____

2 "Yes..." (but there's another problem) _____

3 "I'm not sure about that." (polite disagreement) _____

4 bread _____ , milk, cheese and butter (the first item)

5 bread, milk, cheese and butter _____ (the last item)

6 When I got home _____ , the door was open.

7 When I got home, the door was open _____ .

8 "That's lovely, thank you!" (you really mean it) _____

3 Wrong tune

The arrow shows the speaker's tune. Write the right tune and why.

1 Where do you live? ↗

2 Are you ready? ↘

3 We need bread, milk, cheese and butter ↗.

4 Sit down. ↗

5 It's very nice ↘↗ (and you love it).

6 Lovely day, isn't it? ↗ (small talk)

Remember English uses a wider pitch range than most European languages. If it feels exaggerated to you, it probably sounds natural.

4 A conversation

Write fall, rise or fall-rise for each numbered word.

A: Hi! Are you [1] _____ (free) tonight? — B: Why? What's [2] _____ (happening)? — A: There's a party at Tom's. — B: Hmm. Tom's parties are [3] _____ (okay)... — A: Come on! There'll be music, [4] _____ (food), [5] _____ (games) and [6] _____ (dancing). — B: Well, if I finish my [7] _____ (work), I'll come. — A: Great, see you [8] _____ (later)!

5 Fall or rise?

Sort the kinds of sentence by their normal tune.

statements · wh-questions · commands · exclamations · yes-no questions · list items (not last) · polite requests · first part of a sentence

fall ↘	rise ↗

Where are the answers?

The answers, with an explanation for each one, are in the LinguaBite app. Open this Deep Dive and scroll to Downloads at the bottom of the article: once you have downloaded this worksheet, its answers appear there after a couple of days, so you do the exercises first. You can choose 1, 2 or 3 days in the app's Settings.

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