


Questions

The presentation is divided into two levels:

 = *Lower-intermediate/Intermediate*

 = *Upper-intermediate*

word order

Look at the sample sentences:

I have checked all the invoices.

He is going to London by train next week.

They accepted the conditions quickly.

A **typical word order** for an English sentence is:

Subject-Verb-Object-Manner-Place-Time

SVOMPT

*The manager **will explain** the vision in detail at the meeting tomorrow.*

Note that **will** = auxiliary verb (AV) and **explain** = main verb

auxiliary verb = pomocné sloveso

yes-no questions

Look at the sample sentences:

Do you speak French?

Are you working on this?

Did you check all the invoices?

Have you seen him recently?

Questions with answers **yes or no** (CLOSED QUESTIONS) are formed by changing the typical word order:

we put first the **auxiliary verb** (AV), then the **subject** (S) and then the **main verb**:

| S + (AV) | → | AV + S |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| I know him well. | → | Do you know him well? |
| They have done it. | → | Have they done it? |
| We can start now. | → | Can we start now? |

Note that the short answers repeat the auxiliary.

“Do you speak French?” → “Yes, I do.”/ “No, I don’t.”

wh-questions

Look at the sample sentences:

When do you usually leave work?

Which projects are you working on?

Who did you speak to?

Why have you decided to increase prices?

Questions with question words – **when, which, how, etc.**, are called **wh-questions** or **OPEN QUESTIONS**. After the question word we use the same structure as in yes-no questions:

we put first the **auxiliary verb** (AV), then the **subject** (S) and then the **main verb**:

| S + (AV) | → | question word + AV + S |
|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| I will be back soon. | → | When will you be back? |
| He went home. | → | Where did he go ? |
| I have spoken to him. | → | Who have you spoken to? |

question words and phrases

Question words are: *what, when, where, which, who, whose, why* and *how*.

We often use *what* and *which* with a noun.

What areas do we need to improve?

Which customer called?

We can use *which of* or *which one* but not ~~*what of*~~ and ~~*what one*~~.

Which of the proposals did you accept?

Which one did you accept?

We can use *how + adjective/adverb*: *how long, how many, how much, how old, how far, how often, how fast* etc.

How important is the meeting?

How long will the meeting last?

what or which?

Look at the sample sentences:

1. **Which** colour do you like, pink or blue? = we choose from **two colours**
2. **What** colour do you like? = it can be any colour, the choice is **unlimited**

We use **which** when we are thinking about **a small number of possibilities** (perhaps 2, 3 or 4):

? or ? or ? or ? or ?

What is more **general**:

? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ? or ?

the verb to be

Look at the sample sentences:

***Is** David from England?*

***Are** you ready?*

***Was** it a useful trip?*

***Were** his answers correct?*

In questions with the verb **to be**, **no auxiliary verb** (AV) is used. The verb **to be** goes before **the subject** (S).

| S + to be | | to be + S |
|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| It is time for a meeting. | → | Is it time for a meeting? |
| I am here on business. | → | Are you here on business? |

subject questions

Look at the sample sentences:

Who takes care of orders? → **Sandra** takes care of them.

What happened next? → **Nothing** happened next.

Which customer called you? → **Mr. Smith** called.

If the question word (*who/what/which*) is the **subject** of the question, **do not use** auxiliaries (*do/does/did*) and **do not change** the word order.

These questions are called **subject questions**.

object questions

Look at the sample sentences:

Who did you **meet** yesterday? → I **met** my **colleague**.

What does your work **involve**? → My work **involves** **placing orders**.

Which offer will they **accept**? → They **will accept** **their offer**.

If the question word (*who/what/which*) is the **object** of the question, **use** auxiliaries (*do/does/did*) - and **change** the word order.

These questions are called **object questions**.

subject/object questions

Look at the sample sentences:

Diane loves Jack.

Who loves Jack? → Diane. (subject question)

Who did Diane love? → Jack. (object question)

| who subject | who object |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <u>Somebody</u> telephoned Sally. | Sally telephoned <u>somebody</u> . |
| <u>Who</u> telephoned Sally? | <u>Who</u> did Sally telephone? |

prepositions in questions

Look at the sample questions and notice where the prepositions are placed.

*What are you **looking at**?*

*Who did you **wait for**?*

*What were they **talking about** in the meeting?*

Prepositions usually come **at the end** of the question **after the main verb**.

practice

Make questions and ask about the underlined information.

1. David has gone to London.

Where has David gone?

2. Lucy visited Peter yesterday.

Who visited Peter yesterday?

3. Lucy visited Peter yesterday.

Who did Lucy visit yesterday?

4. John was afraid of the meeting.

What was John afraid of?

5. This book belongs to Paul.

Who does this book belong to?

6. David will get to office twice a week.

How often will David get to office?

7. They are here on business.

Why are they here?

8. He sent the report to his boss.

What did he do with the report?

direct/ indirect questions

Look at the sample questions:

1. *Where do you work?*
2. *Could you tell me where you work?*
3. *Has she got the job in Spain?*
4. *Do you know if she has got the job in Spain?*

When the **DIRECT QUESTION** (1, 3) comes **after** an introductory phrase (**Could you tell me...?/Do you know...?**, etc.), it **loses** the typical question word order and becomes the **INDIRECT QUESTION** (2, 4).

When the direct question is closed, i.e. there is **no question word**, use **if/whether**. (4)

| Direct question | | Indirect question |
|---|---|--|
| <i>What time is it?</i> | → | <i>Do you know what time it is?</i> |
| <i>How much will it cost?</i> | → | <i>I wonder how much it will cost.</i> |
| <i>Could you call me a taxi?</i> | → | <i>I wonder if/whether you could call me a taxi.</i> |
| <i>Did anybody see you?</i> | → | <i>Do you know if/whether anybody saw you?</i> |

some introductory phrases of indirect questions

I don't know...

I was wondering...

I wonder ...

Would you mind telling me...?

I don't remember...

Do you mind me asking...?

Do you have any idea...?

I've no idea...

Do you know...?

Have you got any idea...?

Can you tell me...?

Tell me...

I need to know...

I'd be interested to know...

Can I ask you...?

I'd like to know...

We use indirect questions when we **hesitate**, when we want to be more **polite**, to sound more **formal**, to talk to strangers, teachers, etc.

practice

Change the direct questions below into indirect ones.

1. Who are those people?

Do you know *who those people are?*

2. Where does he work?

Can you tell me *where he works?*

3. Did they arrive?

I wonder *if/whether they arrived.*

4. Can they pay us now?

I don't know *if/whether they can pay us now.*

5. When are you going away?

Could you tell me *when you are going away?*

6. Have they offered us advantageous terms of payment?

Could I ask you *if/whether they have offered us
advantageous terms of payment?*

other types of questions

Look at the dialogue:

A: *George is coming to London.*

B: **When?**

C: *Tomorrow night.*

D: **For how long?**

used in spoken English

Questions in the dialogue are called **ONE-WORD QUESTIONS**.

Look at the dialogue:

A: *I've just come back from London.*

B: *You've just come back from **London**? / You've just come back from **where**?*

used in spoken English

Statements used as questions by giving them a rising intonation are called **ECHO QUESTIONS**. They are used when the speaker believes he/she knows the information but **wants to check** or to **show surprise**. A question word can also be used in the place of the information that surprises.

negative questions

Look at the sample sentences:

- 1. Don't you think that it is too much?*
- 2. Do you not think that it is too much? (rather formal)*
- 3. Don't you accept credit cards?*
- 4. Haven't we met before?*

The sample sentences are called **NEGATIVE QUESTIONS**.

We use them:

- to **disagree politely** (1, 2)
- to **show surprise** (3)
- when we expect the **answer to be yes** (4)

question tags

Look at the sample questions:

*You speak French, **don't you?***

*You don't speak French, **do you?***

*Mary won't be late, **will she?***

used mainly in spoken English

Don't you, do you, will she are **QUESTION TAGS**. They are mini questions at the end of a statement that turn the statement into a question. They invite the other person to reply.

The **meaning** of a question tag depends on **how you say it**. If your **voice goes down**, you **aren't really asking a question**; you are only inviting the listener to agree with you.

But if the **voice goes up**, it is a **real question**.

question tags

Question tags are formed using an **auxiliary** or a **modal**.

A **positive statement** usually has a **negative tag**, and **vice-versa**.

| | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| | You went to the conference, | didn't you? |
| + → - | You can meet him tomorrow, | can't you? |
| | He's here, | isn't he? |

| | | |
|-------|---|-----------------|
| | You didn't go to the conference, | did you? |
| - → + | You can't meet him tomorrow, | can you? |
| | He's not here, | is he? |

A **negative statement** with a **positive tag** is used to ask people in a polite way.

Note that in order to express **surprise** or **interest**, you can use a **positive statement** with a **positive question tag** (with rising intonation).

*The Johnsons **are leaving** for Australia, **are they?***

question tags

Look at the sample questions:

1. **Let's** break for coffee now, **shall we?**
2. **Have** a seat, **will you?**
3. **Give** me a call later, **won't you?**
4. **Pass** me the file, **could you?**
5. **I'm** late, **aren't I?**

| | Question tags | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Let's ... , | shall we? | It is suggestion. (1) |
| imperatives | will you?/won't you? | (2, 3) |
| impeartives (requests) | can you?/could you? | (4) |
| I'm/ I am... , | aren't I? | (5) |

practice

Add a question tag to each sentence.

1. We're nearly there, *aren't we?*
2. You know the Brazilian market, *don't you?*
3. You went to Brazil in March, *didn't you?*
4. He's never been to Brazil, *has he?*
5. You won't be late, *will you?*
6. Harry isn't going to retire, *is he?*
7. We had a good meal last night, *didn't we?*
8. I'm late, *aren't I?*
9. Let's meet again soon, *shall we?*
10. Don't underestimate it, *will you?*

practice

Make a question with a question tag.

1. Ask a colleague if he sent a fax. You expect the answer to be “no”.
You ***didn't send a fax, did you?***
2. Ask a colleague if he sent a fax. You expect the answer to be “yes”.
You ***sent a fax, didn't you?***
3. Ask a stranger at the airport if his name is Mr Peters. You are not sure his name is Mr Peters.
Your name ***isn't Mr Peters, is it?***
4. You recognize someone. You are sure his name is Mr Peters.
Your name ***is Mr Peters, isn't it?***
5. You guess that Biotec have cancelled their order.
Biotec ***have cancelled their order, haven't they?***
6. You are very surprised that Biotec have cancelled their order.
Biotec ***haven't cancelled their order, have they?***

reply questions

Look at the dialogues:

1. A: *I went to Head Office last week.*

B: ***Did you?***

2. A: *I can't install the new software.*

B: ***Can't you?***

3. A: *I think they are arriving at ten.*

B: ***Are they?***

used in spoken English

The questions in the dialogues are called **REPLY QUESTIONS**. They are used when we want to show:

- **interest** (1)
- **surprise** (2)
- **uncertainty** (3).

The reply questions use **an auxiliary verb like in a question tag**, but there is **no change** of positive to negative.

prepositions in questions

Look at the sample questions:

1. **Who/whom** does he report **to**?
2. **To whom** does he report?
3. **Which** funds do they invest **in**?
4. **In which** funds do they invest?

Prepositions usually come **at the end** of the question. (1, 3)

However, they can come **at the beginning** (2, 4).

This position of prepositions is **formal** and **less common**.

Do not use **who** after a preposition.

~~*For who are you waiting?*~~

SOURCES

Sources of theory and examples:

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