

## Forming questions; reporting questions

### A Forming questions

Some questions begin with a *wh*-word. We can call these **wh-questions**:

- What are you doing tomorrow? ◦ Where have you been?

Some questions can be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. We can call these **yes/no questions**.

- Have you had to come far? ◦ Did she leave any message?

### B

If there is an auxiliary verb (**be, do, have, can, will, etc.**) we put it in front of the subject:

- **Have you** ever visited California? ◦ **Why are you** telling me this now?

If there is more than one auxiliary verb, we put only the first auxiliary in front of the subject:

- **Will they** be arrested if they refuse to leave? (*not* Will be they arrested...?)

We can make questions in a similar way when **be** is a main verb:

- **Was she** happy when she lived in France? ◦ When **is he** likely to arrive?

When we ask **yes/no questions** with **have** as the main verb, we usually use **Have...got...?** or

**Do...have...?** Questions such as 'Have you a pen?' are rather formal (see also Unit 27):

- Do you **have...** / Have you got a reservation? (*rather than* Have you a...?)

### C

If there is no other auxiliary verb, we make a question by putting **do** or **does** (present simple), or **did** (past simple) in front of the subject. A bare infinitive comes after the subject:

- **Does anyone** know where I left my diary? ◦ When **did you** last see Mary?

If we use **what, which, who** or **whose** as the subject, we don't use **do**:

- **What happened** to your car? (*not* What did happen...?)

Compare:

- **Who** (= subject) **did you** speak to at the party? *and* ◦ **Who** (= object) **spoke** to you?

Notice that we can sometimes use **do** when **what, which, who** or **whose** is subject if we want to encourage the speaker to give an answer. **Do** is stressed in spoken English:

- Come on, be honest – who **did** tell you?

### D

Study how we ask questions about what people think or say using a *that*-clause:

- When do you think (that) he will arrive? ◦ What do you suggest (that) I should do next?

We can ask questions like this with **advise, propose, recommend, say, suggest, suppose, think**.

When the *wh*-word is the subject of the second clause we don't include **that**:

- Who did you say was coming to see me this morning? (*not* ...say that was coming...?)

### E Reporting questions

When we report a **wh-question** we use a *reporting clause* (see Unit 43) followed by a clause beginning with a *wh*-word. When we report a **yes/no question** we use a *reporting clause* followed by a clause beginning with either **if** or **whether**:

- She asked me **what** the problem was. ◦ Liz wanted to know **if/whether** I'd seen Tony.

We usually put the subject before the verb in the *wh*-, *if*-, or *whether*-clause:

- 'Have you seen Paul recently?' → She wanted to know **if I had seen** Paul recently.

However, if the original question begins **what, which, or who** followed by **be + complement**, we can put the complement before or after **be** in the report:

- 'Who was the winner?' → I asked who **the winner was**. (or ...who **was the winner**.)

Notice that we don't use a form of **do** in the *wh*-, *if*-, or *whether*-clause:

- She asked me where I (had) found it. (*not* ...where did I find it./...where I did find it.)

However, if we are reporting a negative question, we can use a negative form of **do**:

- He asked (me) why I **didn't** want anything to eat.

## EXERCISES

### 33.1 What questions did Jill ask Peter? (B & C)

- 1 ...if you know my sister. Do you know my sister?
- 2 ...what needs to be done next.
- 3 ...who **really** gave you that ring.
- 4 ...who invited you to the restaurant.
- 5 ...if you have finished your project.
- 6 ...if you went to the concert last night.
- 7 ...what the result of your exam was.
- 8 ...which you like best – chicken or turkey.
- 9 ...who you invited to the meeting.
- 10 ...if you have any brothers or sisters.
- 11 ...what you need from the shop.
- 12 ...where you went last weekend.
- 13 ...if you were pleased with the present.
- 14 ...which comes first – your birthday or your brother's.
- 15 ...if you are playing cricket this weekend.
- 16 ...what **really** happened to your eye.
- 17 ...whether you speak Italian.
- 18 ...where your friend John lives.



### 33.2 Use any appropriate *wh*-word and the verb given to complete the question, as in 1. Put in (that) if it is possible to include that. (D)

- 1 Why do you say (that) you don't like Carl? (say)
- 2 ..... would be a good person to ask? (think)
- 3 ..... he'll be arriving? (suppose)
- 4 ..... I should do to lose weight? (recommend)
- 5 ..... is a good time to arrive? (suggest)
- 6 ..... we should go in town for a good meal? (advise)
- 7 ..... Max should be asked to resign? (propose)
- 8 ..... is wrong with Daniel? (suppose)

### 33.3 Report these questions using a *wh*-, *if*- or *whether*-clause, as appropriate. Make any necessary changes to verb tense, pronouns, etc. (Study Units 45 and 49 if necessary.) (D)

- 1 'How much will they pay you?' She asked me how much they would pay me.
- 2 'Will you be coming back later?' She asked me...
- 3 'When do you expect to finish the book?' She asked me...
- 4 'When are you leaving?' She asked me...
- 5 'Where did you get the computer from?' She asked me...
- 6 'Why didn't you tell me earlier?' She asked me...
- 7 'How do you get to Northfield?' She asked me...
- 8 'Are meals included in the price, or not?' She asked me...
- 9 'What do you want?' She asked me...
- 10 'Are you happy in your new job?' She asked me...
- 11 'What did you think of the performance yesterday?' She asked me...
- 12 'Have you ever eaten snails?' She asked me...

## Asking and answering negative questions

**A** We can sometimes use negative **yes/no** or **wh-questions** to make a suggestion, to persuade someone, to criticise, or to show that we are surprised, etc.:

- Why don't we go out for a meal? (a suggestion)
- Wouldn't it be better to go tomorrow instead? (persuading someone)
- Can't you play that trumpet somewhere else? (a criticism)
- Didn't you tell them who you were? (showing surprise)

**B** We usually make a negative **yes/no** or **wh-** (particularly **why**) question with an auxiliary verb + **-n't** before the subject:

- **Doesn't he** want to come with us? ◦ **Haven't you** got anything better to do?
- **Why can't we** go by bus?
- 'I'm not sure I like their new house.' 'What don't you like about it?'

We can also ask a negative question using a negative statement and a positive 'tag' at the end:

- We don't have to leave just yet, do we?

In more formal speech and writing, or when we want to give some special emphasis to the negative (perhaps to show that we are angry, very surprised, or that we want particularly to persuade someone), we can put **not** after the subject:

- Did *she* **not** realise that she had broken the window?
- Can *they* **not** remember anything about it? ◦ Why **did you** not return the money?

If the question word is the subject, we put **-n't** or **not** after the auxiliary verb:

- Who **wouldn't** like to own an expensive sports car? (*not* Who not would like...?)

**C** We sometimes use negative words other than **not** (or **-n't**) such as **never**, **no**, **nobody**, **nothing**, and **nowhere**:

- Why **do you never** help me with my homework? (*or* Why don't you ever help...?)
- **Have you no** money left? (*or* Don't you have any money left?)
- **Have you nowhere** to go? (*or* Haven't you got anywhere to go?)

('Haven't you any...?' and 'Haven't you anywhere...?' would be formal in the last two examples.)

**D** Some negative questions anticipate that the answer will be or should be 'Yes':

- 'Wasn't Chris in Japan when the earthquake struck?' 'Yes, he was.'
- 'Didn't I see you in Paris last week?' 'That's right.'

Other negative questions anticipate that the answer will be or should be 'No':

- 'What's wrong? Don't you eat fish?' 'No, it disagrees with me.'
- 'Haven't you finished yet?' 'Sorry, not yet.'

It is usually clear from the context which kind of answer is anticipated.

Notice how we answer negative questions:

- 'Don't you enjoy helping me?' 'Yes.' (= Yes, I do enjoy it.) *or* 'No.' (= No, I don't enjoy it.)
- 'You're not living here, are you?' 'Yes.' (= Yes, I am living here.) *or* 'No.' (= No, I'm not living here.)

**E** We can make a suggestion with **Why not + verb** or **Why don't/doesn't...**:

- **Why not** decorate the house yourself? (*or* Why don't you decorate...?)
- **Why not** give her what she wants? (*or* Why don't we give her...?)

**Why didn't...** isn't used to make a suggestion, but can be used to criticise someone:

- **Why didn't** you tell me that in the first place?

## EXERCISES

**34.1** Write an appropriate negative question for each situation. Use **-n't** in your answer. (B)

- 1 A: Can you show me where her office is? (...there before?)  
B: Why? **Haven't you been there before?**
- 2 A: I'm afraid I won't be able to give you a lift home. (...drive here?)  
B: Why not?
- 3 A: I've left my job at Ronex. (...happy there?)  
B: Why?
- 4 A: Will you help me look for my purse? (...where you put it?)  
B: Why?
- 5 A: Maybe it would be better not to give that vase to Jane for Christmas. (...like it?)  
B: Why not?
- 6 A: We might as well go home now. (...we can do to help?)  
B: Why?

Do the same for these situations. You are particularly surprised or annoyed.

- 7 A: I'm sorry, but I don't know the answer. (...supposed to be / expert / the subject?)  
B: Why not? **Are you not supposed to be an expert on the subject?**
- 8 A: I was expecting you at 8 o'clock. (...my message / would be late?)  
B: Why?
- 9 A: I haven't been able to finish the work. (...my instructions?)  
B: Why not?

**34.2** Expand the notes and write two alternative negative questions in each situation. In the first use **-n't**; in the second use one of: **never**, **no**, **nobody**, **nothing**, **nowhere**. (B & C)

- 1 (*not / anything / me to do*) **Isn't there anything for me to do? / Is there nothing for me to do?**  
In that case, I'll go home.
- 2 (*not any sign / Don / station*) '.....?' 'No, I didn't see him.'
- 3 (*why / not ever phone me*) '.....?' I always have to contact you.
- 4 (*can / not find anybody / come with you*) '.....?' 'No, everyone is busy.'
- 5 'I'll have to leave my bike in the kitchen.' (*not / anywhere else / to put it*) '.....?'

**34.3** Would you expect **Yes** or **No** in these conversations? (D)

- 1 'You're not a student, are you?' '....., I'm studying French and History.'
- 2 'Couldn't you leave work early?' '....., I've got too much to do.'
- 3 'Don't you want to wait to find out the results?' '....., I think I'll come back later.'
- 4 'Aren't you feeling well?' '....., I'm just a bit worried, that's all.'
- 5 'Wouldn't you like another coffee?' '....., that would be lovely.'
- 6 'Didn't you tell me that your uncle was an explorer?' '....., he was an astronomer.'

**34.4** Make any appropriate suggestion using either **Why not + verb** or **Why don't you....** (E)

- 1 My doctor has advised me to lose weight.
- 2 I have to visit Spain for my work and I need to improve my Spanish.
- 3 I've just bought a boat and I need to give it a name.
- 4 More and more heavy lorries are going past my house. It's noisy and dangerous.

# Wh-questions with how, what, which, and who

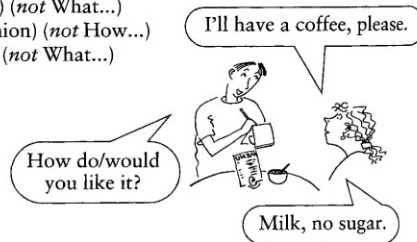
- A** Study these sentences:
- Which biscuits did you make – the chocolate ones or the others? (*rather than* What...?)
  - I've got orange juice or apple juice. Which would you prefer? (*rather than* What...?)
  - He just turned away when I asked him. What do you think he meant? (*not* Which...?)
  - What do you want to do this weekend? (*not* Which...?)
- We usually use **which** when we are asking about a fixed or limited number of things or people, and **what** when we are not. Often, however, we can use either **which** or **what** with little difference in meaning. Compare:
- What towns do we go through on the way? (the speaker doesn't know the area) *and*
  - Which towns do we go through on the way? (the speaker knows the area and the towns in it)

- B** We usually use **who** to ask a question about people:
- Who will captain the team if Nick isn't available?
- However, we use **which** when we want to identify a person or people out of a group (for example, in a crowded room, or on a photograph) and when we ask about particular classes of people. We can use **what** to ask about a person's job or position:
- 'Which is your brother?' 'The one next to Ken.'
  - Which would you rather be – a doctor or a vet? (*or* What would...?)
  - 'What's your sister?' 'She's a computer programmer.'

- C** We use **which**, not **who** or **what**, in questions before **one(s)** and **of**:
- Which *one* of us should tell Jean the news? (*not* Who one of us...?)
  - I've decided to buy one of these sweaters. Which *one* do you think I should choose? (*rather than* What one do you think...?)
  - Which *of* these drawings was done by you? (*not* What of...)
  - Which *of* you would like to go first? (*not* Who of...)

- D** When we use **who** or **what** as a *subject*, the verb that follows is singular, even if a plural answer is expected:
- Who *wants* a cup of coffee? (said to a number of people)
  - What *is* there to do in Leeds over Christmas? (expects an answer giving a number of activities)

- E** Study the use of **how** and **what** in these questions:
- What's this one called? (*not* How...)
  - What do you think of her work? (*not* How...)
  - What is the blue button for? (= What purpose does it have?) (*not* How...)
  - How about (having) a swim? (= a suggestion) (*or* What about...)
  - What is your brother like? (= asking what kind of person he is) (*not* How...)
  - How is your brother? (= asking about health) (*not* What...)
  - What was the journey like? (= asking an opinion) (*not* How...)
  - How was the journey? (= asking an opinion) (*not* What...)
  - What do you like about it? (= asking for specific details) (*not* How...)
  - How do you like it? (*not* What...)
- (i) = asking for a general opinion  
(ii) = asking for details about coffee, tea or a meat dish ('How would you like it?' is also possible)



Reporting questions ⇒ Negative questions ⇒

## EXERCISES

### 35.1 Underline one or both. (A)

- 1 I can't get the computer to work. Which/What have you done to it?
- 2 When we get to the next junction, which/what way shall we go?
- 3 Which/What countries in Europe have you been to?
- 4 Which/What are you worried about?
- 5 Which/What kind of work do you do?
- 6 Which/What do you think I should wear – my blue or my red tie?
- 7 I still have to type these letters and photocopy your papers. Which/What do you want me to do next?
- 8 Which/What is the best way to get to Sutton from here?

Look again at the answers in which you have underlined both. Are there any where **which** is more likely than **what**?

### 35.2 Complete the sentences with who, which or what. (B & C)

- 1 ..... are you working for now?
- 2 '..... are Paul's parents?' 'The couple near the door.'
- 3 ..... living person do you most admire?
- 4 '..... are Tom's parents?' 'They're both teachers.'
- 5 ..... of them broke the window?
- 6 ..... one of you is Mr Jones?
- 7 ..... else knew of the existence of the plans?
- 8 ..... is to blame for wasting so much public money?
- 9 ..... knows what will happen next?
- 10 ..... of the countries voted against sanctions?
- 11 I know that Judy is an accountant, but ..... is her sister Nancy?

### 35.3 If necessary, correct these sentences. If the sentence is already correct, put a ✓. (B–D)

- 1 What one of you borrowed my blue pen?
- 2 'Who do you want to be when you grow up?' 'An astronaut.'
- 3 Who are you inviting to the meal?
- 4 What are left in the fridge?
- 5 Which of the children are in the choir?
- 6 'Who are coming with you in the car?' 'Jane, Amy and Alex.'

### 35.4 First, complete the sentences with how, what, or how/what if both are possible. Then choose an appropriate answer for each question. (E)

- 1 '.....'s your cat now? a 'It's beautiful.'
- 2 '..... about stopping for a coffee?' b 'Good idea.'
- 3 '..... was your holiday like?' c 'The flowers and the small pond.'
- 4 '..... do you like about the garden?' d 'He needs a lot more practice.'
- 5 '.....'s your cat called?' e 'It's a lot better, thanks.'
- 6 '..... do you like the garden.' f 'We really enjoyed it.'
- 7 '..... was your holiday?' g 'Tom.'
- 8 '..... did you think of his playing?' h 'We had a great time.'

## A Question tags: form

- A question tag is a short phrase at the end of a statement that turns it into a question. It invites the other person to reply.
- Question tags are formed using auxiliaries (*do, be, have* or a modal). An affirmative statement usually has a negative tag, and vice-versa.  
 You **speak** French, **don't you?**      You **don't speak** French, **do you?**  
 You **went** to the conference, **didn't you?**      You **didn't go** to the conference, **did you?**  
 You **can meet** him tomorrow, **can't you?**      You **can't meet** him tomorrow, **can you?**  
 He's here, **isn't he?**      He **isn't** here, **is he?**

## B Question tags: use

- Here are five possible uses of question tags presented in a dialogue:  
 A: You **haven't** got the sales figures yet, **have you?** (request for information)  
 B: **They don't** have to be ready till Friday, **do they?** (confirmation)  
 A: You're **not** going to leave it until the last minute again, **are you?** (attack)  
 B: Well, **I haven't** had any time, **have I?** (defence)  
 A: So **it wasn't** you going home early yesterday, **was it?** (sarcasm)
- If we use a negative statement with an affirmative tag, we often expect the answer to be *no*.  
 A: I'm going to need an interpreter.  
 B: Of course. You **don't** speak French, **do you?**  
 This form can be more polite because it is easier for the other person to reply *no*.  
 A: You **don't** speak French, **do you?**  
 B: No, sorry, I don't.
- A negative statement with an affirmative tag can also be used to ask people for things in a polite way.  
 You **couldn't** give me a hand, **could you?**  
 You **haven't** got any change for the parking meter, **have you?**

## C Question tags: other points

- If the main verb in the statement is *have*, you make a tag with *do*.  
 You **had** a meeting this morning, **didn't** you?  
 When *have* is the auxiliary the tag is with *have* (as normal):  
 You've just been to Austria, **haven't** you?
- The tag with *I'm/I am* is *aren't*.  
 I'm a fool, **aren't** I?
- The tag with *Let's* is *shall*. This is a suggestion.  
 Let's break for coffee now, **shall** we?
- After an imperative we can use *will you?* or *won't you?*  
 Have a seat, **will you?**  
 Give me a call later, **won't you?**  
 If the imperative is a request we can use *can you?* or *could you?*  
 Hold the lift for me, **can you?**  
 Pass me that file, **could you?**

## D Reply questions

- We can use a short question to reply to what someone says. We do this to show interest, surprise or uncertainty. The meaning is like *Really?* or *Is that true?*  
 A: I went to Head Office last week.  
 B: **Did you?** (interest)  
 A: I can't install the new software.  
 B: **Can't you?** (surprise)  
 A: I think they're arriving at ten.  
 B: **Are they?** (uncertainty)
- The reply question uses an auxiliary verb like in a question tag, but there is no change of affirmative to negative.

## E Indirect questions

- We can be more polite or tentative by beginning a question with a phrase like *Do you know, Do you think/feel, Do you mind telling me, Could you tell me, Could I ask you, I'd like to know, I was wondering.*  
*Do you feel this rise in interest is a result of increased recruiting? Can you give me Yale's profile for the Class of '99 (ie minority, non-US, female)? Also, you mentioned that Yale has been working hard to strengthen its interview program. Could you tell me a bit more about what the school is doing on that front?* (Business Week website)
- The word order of an indirect question is like a normal statement.  
 direct: **Could you** call me a taxi?      indirect: Do you think **you could** call me a taxi?  
 direct: How old **are you?**      indirect: Could I ask you how old **you are?**
- Where there is no question word or modal verb we use *if* or *whether*.  
 direct: **Does** Jane still **work** here?      indirect: Do you know **if** Jane still **works** here?

## F Prepositions in questions

- The preposition comes in the same place as in a statement, following the main verb, and this is often at the end.  
 Who are you waiting **for**?  
 What are you looking **at**?  
 Where do you come **from**?  
 What were they talking **about** in the meeting?

## G What is it for and what was it like

- We use *what ... for?* to ask about a purpose. The meaning is 'why'.  
 What is this switch **for**? (= Why is this switch here?)
- We use *what ... like?* to ask if something is good or bad. The meaning is 'how'.  
 What was the conference **like**? (= How was the conference?)

### Exercise 5 A B C

25 Complete these dialogues with question tags.

**A** JOHN: Hi, Martha, we're due to meet next week (1) ..... *aren't we* ..... ? Well, I've just remembered that I'm on holiday then. Can you make another time?

MARTHA: Yes, when are you free?

JOHN: Um, let's meet a fortnight on Tuesday, (2) ..... ?

MARTHA: Let me look in my diary. Yes, that's fine – a fortnight on Tuesday.

**B** DAN: Luis will be arriving at the office at two, (3) ..... ?

FRANK: No, at three.

DAN: Oh, right. Well, he's been here before, so he should know how to find the office, (4) ..... ?

FRANK: But that was before we moved buildings, (5) ..... ?

DAN: Oh, yeah. I'll email him with directions to get here, then.

**C** STAN: These designs need to go to Norton Smith's office in Guildford today. They've got a fax machine there, (6) ..... ?

NICOLE: Yes, but it's not working. I'll send the document to them by first class post.

STAN: It'd be quicker if you sent it by courier, (7) ..... ?

NICOLE: Oh, yes. I'll sort that out now.

**D** BRIDGET: This quote for the parts is much cheaper than the other one we had, (8) ..... ?

SERGE: Yes, much. It's very strange. They haven't forgotten to include delivery costs, (9) ..... ?

BRIDGET: No, everything is included in the price.

SERGE: Really? It all looks too good to be true, (10) ..... ?

BRIDGET: Um, yes, well, let's give them a try anyway.