

Questions

There are two types of questions: Yes / No questions (Interrogative form) and wh-questions.

Eg: Did she leave a message?

Do you want me to post the letter?

Is he going to arrive soon?

Eg: Who keeps the keys?

Where have you been?

To ask a wh-question, one should follow these steps:

- 1) Formulate the interrogative form of the statement (yes / No question).
- 2) Select the appropriate question word.
- 3) Pay attention to restrictions.

I. Forming the interrogative form

If there is an auxiliary (be, have, will, can ...) we put it before the subject.

Eg: Have you ever visited California?

Are you leaving now?

Could you help me, please?

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

Eg: Will they be arrested if they refuse to leave? (Not will be they arrested if they refuse to leave?)

When be is a full verb, we put it in front of the subject.

Eg: Is he likely to arrive now?

Was she happy when she lived in France?

When have is a main verb, we use "Do".

I have a pen Do you have a pen?

Have you got a pen?

*If there is no auxiliary, we use the 'operator Do' (simple present / past tenses) in front of the subject. **Note** that in this case a bare-infinitive (stem) comes after the subject.*

Eg: Does anyone know where I put my keys?

Did you see John yesterday?

Do they need it?

When, who, which, what, whose are used as subjects (part of the subject phrase), they are normally followed by an affirmative verb.

Eg: They took my gun. -----→ Who took my gun?
Who pays the pills? (Note)
Which dove arrived first? Whose car broke down?
What caused the explosion?

Note: *When we use who / what as a subject, the verb is singular even if a plural answer is expected.*

Eg: Who wants a cup of tea? (said to a group of people)
What is there to do on Christmas? (expecting you to list activities)

If who / what/ which/ whose are used as object (D.O / I.O / O.prep), an interrogative verb is needed (we must use the interrogative form)

Eg: Who did you see?
Whose umbrella did you borrow?
What paper do you read?

If who / what/ which / whose are used as object of preposition (of course an int.verb is needed), in formal English, we use preposition + whom/ which/ whar.

Eg: with whom did you go? To whom were you speaking?

But in ordinary English, we move the preposition to the end of the sentence.

Eg: Whom did you go with? Whom were you speaking to?

II.Wh – Words:

Wh-words can be pronouns / adjectives / adverbs depending on what they substitute.

What: *used to ask for things in subject / object position*

What makes that noise?

What for? == *to ask for purpose.*

What did you do that for?
He puts on glasses to see clearly.
What did he put on glasses for?

What + be Like? *(request a description)*

What was the exam like?
What does she look like.

What + be ? *(ask for occupation / profession)*

What are they? What was she?

Who / whom : to ask for people. Subj position (who) / object position (whom)

Who will captain the team?

Which : is usually used for choice or selection among a set of element / people.

Eg: which do you prefer?

We may also use it before one or an of-phrase

Eg: Which one of us will tell her?

Which of these do you like?

Whose: to ask for possession. It could be used as a pronoun or an adjective.

Whose book is this? (adjective)

Whose is this? (pronoun)

III. Wh – Adverbs : why/ where/ when/ how

Why? For what reason? **Eg:** why was he late?

When? Time **Eg:** when did he invent it?

Where? Place (location / position) **Eg:** where do you live?

How? (in what way / manner?) **Eg:** How did you prepare it?

How + adj: in question of measurement. **Eg:** how old are you? How deep? How tall?
How high

How + often? Frequency

How long? Duration

How much/ many (number / quantity)

IV. Asking and answering negative questions

We can sometimes use negative yes / no or Wh-questions to make suggestion, to persuade someone, to criticize, or to show that we are surprised, etc:

- Why don't we eat out? (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)

We usually make a negative yes/no or wh- (particularly why) question with 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 negative questions using a negative statement and a positive 'tag' at the end. E.g: 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** realize 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:

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

*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? (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.)

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.)

*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 want? (or **why don't** we give her ...?)

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

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