GRAMMAR

1.1 direct and indirect questions

direct questions

The word order for most questions is: (question word) + auxiliary verb + subject + main verb.

What does 'strategy' mean? *Have you finished yet?*

Subject questions: When the question word is the subject of the sentence, use the affirmative form of the verb.

What happened next? NOT ~~*What did happen next?*~~

Prepositions in questions usually come at the end.

What are you working on? *What was Thailand like?*

(Here *like* is a preposition and the question is asking for a description.)

In very formal English, prepositions can come at the beginning.

In which newspaper did you read it?

Short questions, often ending in prepositions, are common in conversation:

A: I'm going out tonight. *B: Where to?/Who with?*
A: I didn't go to the party. *B: How come?/Why not?*
A: I hate spicy food. *B: Why's that?/Such as?*
A: Can you lend me a paintbrush? *B: Which one?/What for?*

indirect questions

Use indirect questions to ask questions in a more polite way or for very personal questions. After the opening phrase, use the affirmative form.

Could you tell me what time the lesson starts?
NOT ~~*Could you tell me what time does the lesson start?*~~

Do you mind me asking why you left your last job?
NOT ~~*Do you mind me asking why did you leave your last job?*~~

In *yes/no* questions, use *if* or *whether* + the affirmative form.

Do you know if Mike's married?

Other opening phrases include: *Can I ask (you) ...?, Do you have any idea ...?, Would you mind telling me ...?, What/Why/Where/Who do you think?, I was wondering ..., I wonder ..., I'd be interested to know ..., I'd like to know ..., I want to know ...*

Only use a question mark if the introductory phrase contains a question.

I wonder where Derek is. *How do you think he did that?*

When a question is very personal, start with *Can I ask a personal question?*

5 A Make sentences with the opening phrases.

1 Why are you studying English?
Can you tell me *why you are studying English?*
2 How long do you plan to study?
Do you have any idea ... ?
3 What do you do in the evenings?
Can I ask ... ?
4 Do you have a full-time job?
Do you mind me asking ... ?
5 Which countries have you visited?
I'd be interested to know ... .
6 Where did you get that watch?
Could you tell me ... ?
7 Is there a good café anywhere near here?
Do you know ... ?
8 Would you like to come for a coffee?
I was wondering ... .

B 1.2 Listen and check your answers. Which opening phrase is best for asking a very personal question?

LIVEWORKSHEETS