

Language at work

GRAMMAR REFERENCE

Direct and indirect questions

Form

We use a question word (e.g. *what, when, how*) + auxiliary verb (e.g. *be, do, can*) + subject + verb to form direct questions.

What are you doing tomorrow?

When did she arrive? How can he get there?

Yes/No direct questions

For a direct question which needs a 'yes' or 'no' answer, we just use an auxiliary verb at the beginning.

Are you free tomorrow? Did she arrive on time?

Can he get there?

We use the following phrases before indirect questions.

I'd like to know/ask ... Do you know ...

Can/Could you/anyone tell me ... I was wondering ...

Do you have any idea ... Would you mind telling me ...

Use a question word after each indirect question phrase, but use the same word order as an affirmative sentence and don't use an auxiliary verb.

Direct question	Indirect question
<i>What time does the train leave?</i>	<i>I'd like to know what time the train leaves.</i>
<i>How often do trains to London leave?</i>	<i>Do you know how often trains to London leave?</i>

Yes/No indirect questions

For an indirect question which needs a 'yes' or 'no' answer, use an *if* statement after each phrase.

*A I was wondering **if** this train goes to London?*

B Yes, it does.

*A Do you know **if** it leaves at three?*

B No, it doesn't. It leaves at four.

Writing indirect questions

Some indirect questions need a question mark and some just need a full stop. If the phrase starts with a question word, use a question mark. If the phrase is a statement, use a full stop.

Do you know how often trains to London leave?

I'd like to know what time the train leaves.

Use

- 1 We use indirect questions instead of direct questions to sound more formal, polite and less direct.

*I was wondering **if** you could meet me at 3.00?*

Can you meet me at 3.00? (more direct)

- 2 We use indirect questions at the beginning of an enquiry followed by a series of direct questions.

A Can you tell me how much it costs to send a package to the USA?

B It depends on the size.

A How much does a five kilo box cost?

- 1 Put the words in the correct order to make direct or indirect questions.

1 was / if / could / I / order / an / place / I / wondering

I was wondering if I could place an order ?

2 much / a / does / it / magazine / cost / how / to / send

_____ ?

3 idea / do / you / how / any / it / long / have / takes

_____ ?

4 would / mind / arrived / if / a / telling / me / has / package / you

_____ ?

5 has / visitor / yet / my / arrived

_____ ?

6 tell / the / where / is / me / could / post / anyone / office

_____ ?

7 do / for / you / a / if / know / left / message / they / me

_____ ?

8 will / my / what / arrive / day / order

_____ ?

- 2 Complete the indirect questions so that they have the same meaning as the direct questions.

1 What would you like to drink?

I was wondering what you'd like to drink.

2 Why didn't you call to say you'd be late?

I'd like to know _____.

3 Where is the next conference?

Could you tell me _____?

4 Which flight is Mr Stoppard on?

Do you have any idea _____?

5 Are they arriving tonight?

Do you know _____?

6 How often does the bus come?

Would you mind telling me _____?