

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

How much does it cost to send a magazine? ?

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

Do you have any ideas about how long it takes? ?

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

Would you mind telling me if you have a package for me? ?

5 has / visitor / yet / my / arrived

Has my visitor arrived yet? ?

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

Where is the office where I could post my anyone? ?

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

Do you know if they have left a message for me? ?

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

What day will my order arrive? ?

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 why you didn't call.

3 Where is the next conference?

Could you tell me where the next conference is?

4 Which flight is Mr Stoppard on?

Do you have any idea which flight Mr Stoppard is on?

5 Are they arriving tonight?

Do you know if they are arriving tonight?

6 How often does the bus come?

Would you mind telling me how often the bus comes?

7