

Interrogative sentences in English (examples list)

HOW TO ASK QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH: The Interrogative sentence

Summary:

1. *The interrogative words in WH-*
2. *Direct questioning*
3. *Indirect questioning (politeness)*
4. *The interrogative words with HOW*

1. The interrogative words in WH-

Interrogative words are used to obtain information. They are used to ask indirect questions. Here are the most common ones:

- **what** : What's on TV tonight?
- **when** : When did you see her?
- **where** : Where do you live?
- **which** : Which of these cars is yours?
- **who/whom** : Who's that?
- **whose** : Whose phone is this?
- **why** : Why didn't she call back?

What about + v-ing (or how about + v-ing):

- What about eating out?

What + nom and which + nom:

- What colour is your car?
- Which colour do you prefer? Blue or green?

2. Direct questioning

Closed questions (answered by yes or no): if there is no question word, the order of the question is 'auxiliary (or modal) + subject + verb + complement'.

- Are you sleeping?
- Did you like the party?

Open-ended questions: with an interrogative word, the order is "interrogative word + auxiliary + subject".

Question word	Auxiliary	Subject	Verb
What	were	you	doing there?
Who	did	they	talk to?
Where	will	she	go?
What	have	you	done?
When	did	you	meet him?
Why	didn't	she	call back?

When the interrogative word is subject, the auxiliary do is not used.

- What happened?
- Who wants some more tea?

When the question concerns a complement introduced by a preposition, it is placed at the end of the sentence.

- What are you thinking about?
- Who was he dancing with?

The interro-negative sentences combine interrogation and negation. The order is auxiliary + not + subject. It is mainly used to express surprise or ask for confirmation, and is most likely to be answered in the affirmative.

- Don't you like the sea?
- Aren't you coming?

3. Indirect questioning (politeness)

Indirect questions are more polite and formal than direct questions. They are used to talk to people you don't know very well, or in professional situations for example. In fact, the indirect question is not even a real question: it is more of an affirmative sentence that invites the person to give more information.

Indirect questions are preceded by introductory formulas such as:

- *Could you tell me...*
- *Do you know...*
- *Would it be possible...*
- *Is there any chance...*
- *I was wondering...*
- *I'd like to know...*
- *Do you have any idea...*
- *I wonder if...*

In indirect questions with the verb be, the verb comes after the subject:

Direct Interrogation

How much **is it**?

Where **is** the post office?

Indirect Interrogation

Can you tell me how much **it is**?

Could you tell me where the post office **is**?

If the direct question contains the auxiliary do/does/did, it must be removed from the indirect question:

Direct Interrogation

What **do** you want?

When **did** she leave?

Indirect Interrogation

Can you tell me what you want?

I'd like to know when she left.

For closed direct questions (answered by yes or no), put "if" when you want to transform them into indirect questions:

Direct Interrogation

Does Tina like Italian food?

Do they speak Japanese?

Are your friends joining us for dinner?

Indirect Interrogation

Do you know **if** Tina likes Italian food?

I was wondering **if** they speak Japanese.

Could you tell me **if** your friends are joining us for dinner?

4. The interrogative words with HOW

'How' alone at the beginning of a question can be translated as 'in what way...':

- How do you spell your name?
- How do you go to school?

But it can be used in other ways and have different meanings according to its uses:

We use How to ask questions about intensity, measurement with *How + adjective + be*:

- How tall was she?
- How high is this tower?
- How far is it?
- How big is your house?
- How long is this beach?

We can add many adjectives after how: how small, how wide... don't forget to add *BE* conjugated! (is / are / was / were / were)

Ask a question about frequency with How often.... ?

- How often do you go to new York?
- How often do you see him?

To ask about a repetition of times: How many times...

- How many times did you go there?

To ask about a length of time: How long ago...

- [How long ago did they move out?](#)

A starting point in time: How long + present perfect or past perfect

- [How long have you been together?](#)
- [How long had you been together?](#)

The duration: How long + present or preterite:

- [How long are you here for?](#)
- [How long did you live in Spain?](#)

The degree: How well....

- [How well do you know him?](#)

How much + singular and How many + plural:

- [How much is it?](#)
- [How many cars have you got?](#)

How is often used in questions with a perception verb such as look, be, feel, smell, smell, taste, appear or sound:

- [How does it feel to be your own boss?](#)
- [How does it taste?](#)

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