



Questions in English ... the main types

There are 6 main types

1. **General questions** – those having ‘yes’ / ‘no’ answers.
2. **“Wh” questions** – those starting ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’, ‘when’, ‘why’, ‘how’, ‘how many’.
3. **Choice questions** – questions like the general questions but containing an ‘or’.
4. **Negative questions** – they expect a certain (sentence) answer – a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer isn’t possible.
5. **Tag questions** – the question follows a statement of the expected answer.
6. **Indirect questions** – you ask something different from the question you mean!

1: General Questions

“General” questions (they need Yes/No answers)

Q: *Are you an alien?*

A: *No! I come from Hong Kong / Stapleford ...*

Q: *Do you like fish & chips?*

A: *Yes! I like mushy peas, too*

Auxiliary verb – Subject – Verb – Object

What are the auxiliary verbs?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>does / did</i> • <i>Be</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>am, is, are, was, were, will</i> • <i>Have</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>has / had</i> • <i>Modal verbs</i> | <p><i>Modal verbs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>can / could</i> • <i>may / might</i> • <i>must / should</i> • <i>will / shall</i> • <i>would</i> |
|---|--|

Some examples

"Have you got anything that will mend this"?

"Has anyone got a pencil"?

"Can she calculate the answer"?

"Is anybody getting married"?

"Does the dog love you"?

"Must you go to London"?

"Will someone please help me"?

2: "Wh" Questions

“Wh...” questions (they need a full answer)

Q: **Who** *are you*?

A: *I am Gurumba, an astronaut.*

Q: **Where** *do you come* from?

A: *I come from the planet Zog.*

Q: **How** *did you travel* here?

A: *I used my e-bike!*

Wh... (*Auxiliary verb*) – **Subject** – **Verb**

What are the auxiliary verbs?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>does / did</i> • <i>Be</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>am, is, are, was, were, will</i> • <i>Have</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>has / had</i> • <i>Modal verbs</i> | <p><i>Modal verbs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>can / could</i> • <i>may / might</i> • <i>must / should</i> • <i>will / shall</i> • <i>would</i> |
|---|---|

3 types of “Wh...” questions

A) Time	When ...
A) Place	Where ...
A) Reason / purpose	Why ...
A) Condition / Method	How ... / How do ...
B) Object / idea	What ...
B) Person	Who (Whom) ...
C) Part of a group	Which ...
C) Part of a group (owned)	Whose ...

Type A: “Wh...” at the start of a general (direct) question

- **When** ... **will we get** there?
- **Where** ... **is** the TV remote control?
- **Why** ... **are you** so tall?
- **How** ... **is** Uncle Bill?
- **How** ... **does** this work?

Wh... verb – Subject/Object

Wh... auxiliary verb – Subject – verb

Type B: “Wh...” – like normal sentences (no swapped order)

- **Who** ... **is singing** in the rain? [“who” is the **subject**]
(compare to “**Henry is singing** in the **rain**”)
- **Who(m)** ... **will you marry**? [“whom” is the **object**]
(compare to “**You will marry 成龍**”)
- **What** ... **are we learning** about today? [“what” is the **object**]
(compare to “**We are learning** about **questions** today”)
- **What** ... **happened** next? [“what” is the **subject**]
(compare to “An **earthquake happened** next”)

Type C: “Wh...” – goes before subject

- **Which** ... **game is** most fun?
- **Which** ... **road goes** to Derby?
- **Whose** ... **hat is** this?

But not

- **Who’s** [= **Who is**] ... that **man talking** to?

Wh... **subject** – **verb** (– **object**)

“Wh...” with be/do/have/modal verb

When ... can you finish your work today?	[can]
Who ... should pay for this meal?	[should]
What ... has happened now?	[have]
Where ... could we go on holiday next year?	[could]
Which ... city will host the next Olympics?	[be]
Whose ... car did you travel in today?	[do]
Why ... would anyone say that?	[would]
How ... must I behave in church?	[must]

Negative “Wh” questions

- **Why** wouldn't you dance with me last night?
- **Where** can't I drive my 4x4?
- **Which** of these keys won't open the door?
- **Whose** coat isn't muddy?
- **Who** shouldn't be welcomed at the wedding?
- **When** don't you serve curry?
- **How** don't birds get electrocuted when they land on wires?

3: Choice Questions

Choice questions (which need a full answer)

Q: Where would you like to go, the cinema or the theatre?

A: Oh, the cinema, please.

Q: Is he a teacher or a student?

A: He's old enough to be a teacher, but he's so lazy he's still a student!

Q: Does she like ice cream or sweets?

A: Neither! She always snacks on crisps – preferably cheese and onion flavour.

What are the auxiliary verbs?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>does / did</i> • Be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>am, is, are, was, were, will</i> • Have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>has / had</i> • Modal verbs | <p>Modal verbs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>can / could</i> • <i>may / might</i> • <i>must / should</i> • <i>will / shall</i> • <i>would</i> |
|---|---|

Choice questions

The format is either:

Auxiliary – **subject** – (1st object / **verb** / phrase)
 – OR – (2nd object / **verb** / phrase)

OR

Verb – **subject** – (1st object / phrase)

Q: **Do you prefer to wake up early or late?**

Q: **Are we eating in or out this evening?**

Q: **Will they buy a house or rent somewhere?**

Q: **Is this the front or the back of the dress?**

4: Negative Questions

Questions asked negatively

These are used where the *expected* answer would be *positive*, but when we want to make sure that it's positive.

- “Is Kitty happy?” → “Isn't Kitty happy?”, we *expect* Kitty to be happy, but there are signs that she is not.

Answering a negative question

They seem to expect a “yes” / “no” answer
But often a “yes” or “no” answer would be confusing ... so use a short sentence to answer:

- Aren't you tired?

Response) Yes, I am tired / No, I'm fine.

- Hasn't she been to Edinburgh?

Response) No, she hasn't / Yes, she has.

Examples of questions asked negatively

- “Bonita, you’re drunk, aren’t you?”
- “Hasn’t the postman come yet?”
- “Can’t I have an ice cream?”
- “Don’t you drive a car?”
- “Isn't she still in hospital?”
- “Aren’t they vegetarians?”

If someone asked you each question, how would you answer?

Invitations asked negatively

Because we are adding an **expectation** of a **positive** answer, we make invitations more forceful.

- “**Would you like something to eat?**” →
“**Wouldn't you like something to eat?**”,

We now **expect** the person to say “yes”, so they may find it more difficult to say “no”.

Examples of invitations asked negatively

- “**Why don't you** come to the cinema with me?”
- “I know you're on a diet, but **can't you eat** just one of my cookies?”
- “**Won't you join** our English Conversation Club?”

These invites are almost like saying:

- “You should ... come to the cinema / eat one of my cookies / join our Conversation Club”

5: Tag Questions

Tag Questions – to check your understanding

A declaration is followed by a *shortened* request to check that you are correct. The question is asked:

- **negatively** for **positive** declarations
- **positively** for **negative** declarations

e.g. **John is** 60 this year, **isn't he**?

That's not true, **is it**?

Subject starts the declaration and ends the request;
sometimes the same word; sometimes noun & pronoun

Examples of tag questions

- “You **are** working this evening, **aren't** you?”
- “Andrew **isn't** happy, **is** he?”
- “That’s **not** a dandelion, **is** it?”
- “Someone **will help** you, **won't** they?”
- “**No-one remembers** SARs, **do** they?”
- “Flags **can be waved**, **can't** they?”
- “There **are** tigers at the zoo, **aren't** there?”
- “It’s **not** hot, **is** it?”

Things to note about tag questions

- When the noun is negative, we don't need a 'not'
- The confirmation subject is always a pronoun
- We can also use a command instead of a declaration; e.g.
 - “**Try to eat** 5 vegetables every day, **won't** you?”

6: Indirect Questions

Indirect Questions

a general or “Wh” question that hopes for an answer to a ‘hidden’ question or request !!

Often used to politely ask something when your ‘hidden’ question or request might appear too surprising. Typical starts:

- “Can you tell me?”
- “Do you know?”
- “Can you remember?”
- “Is it possible to?”

The person answering will usually understand that they need to give an answer to the ‘hidden’ question.

Examples of indirect questions

Hidden direct question/request	Indirect question	Answer you don't want!	Answer that is hoped for
Where is the toilet?	Does this store have a toilet?	Yes	It's at the back on the left.
Will she be late?	Could you tell me whether she'll be late?	I could	I think she'll be a few minutes early
How can I get a doctor's attention?	Is it possible to see a doctor?	Yes	If you wait on those seats, a doctor will see you very soon.
Is that woman his sister?	Do you know whether that woman is his sister?	Yes, I do know	That's Mary, his oldest sister
Give me your pizza menu.	Could you please show me your pizza menu?	Yes	Of course; here it is.