

Questions in English

1. What is a question?

A **question** is a sentence or expression used to request information, clarification, confirmation or a response. In writing, questions usually end with a **question mark** (?). In speech, they are commonly spoken with rising or questioning intonation.

Key idea:

A question invites the listener or reader to think, respond or provide missing information.

2. Why do we ask questions?

We ask questions in order to:

- **find out information**

Where do you live?

- **check or confirm something**

Is this the right bus?

- **show interest or continue conversation**

How was your day?

- **make suggestions or offers**

Shall we start?

- **express feelings politely**

Could you help me with this?

- **challenge ideas or encourage reflection**

What difference does it make?

The Main Types of Questions in English

WH-questions (Information questions)

Questions beginning with **who**, **what**, **where**, **when**, **why**, **which**, **whose**, **how** to ask for specific information.

Explanation

They usually follow this pattern: WH-word + auxiliary + subject + main verb

Examples

- **Where** did you go?
- **Why** are they early?
- **How** does this machine work?

When to use

Use when the answer cannot be simply “yes” or “no”.

When not to use

Do not use when you only need confirmation. For example, *Are you ready?* (not *Why are you ready?*) unless you really want the reason.

Subject WH-questions (no inversion)

A WH-question where the WH-word itself is the subject.

Explanation

There is no auxiliary inversion.

Who broke the window?
(not *Who did break the window?* in neutral speech)

Examples

- Who phoned you?
- What happened yesterday?
- Which student arrived first?

When to use

Use when the person or thing doing the action is unknown.

When not to use

Avoid adding **do/does/did** unless for emphasis (“Who *did* break it?” — rare).

Yes/No questions (auxiliary first)

Questions that expect the answer **yes** or **no**.

Explanation: Structure: Auxiliary/Modal + subject + main verb

Examples

- Do you like reading?
- Are they working?
- Can I sit here?

When to use

Use to confirm facts or check details.

When not to use

Not suitable when you need extended information. Use WH-questions instead.

Do-support questions

When there is **no auxiliary verb**, English adds **do/does/did**.

Explanation: Do/Does/Did + subject + base verb

Examples

- Do you understand?
- Does she drive?
- Did they enjoy it?

When to use

Use for present simple and past simple when no other auxiliary is present.

When not to use

Do not use with **be, have (as an auxiliary), modals** or continuous tenses.

(Not: *Do you are happy?*)

Tag questions

A statement followed by a short question at the end.

Explanation: Statement + , + auxiliary + subject pronoun

Examples

- You're coming, aren't you?
- She didn't call, did she?
- We should finish, shouldn't we?

When to use

Use to check information, invite agreement or soften statements.

When not to use

Avoid when the tone may sound challenging or sarcastic in formal writing.

Declarative (tone) questions

Statements spoken with questioning intonation.

Explanation: Grammar looks like a statement, but voice rises.

Examples

- You're ready?
- He lives here?
- This is yours?

When to use

Informal conversation, surprise, quick checking.

When not to use

Avoid in formal writing and academic exams.

Negative questions

Questions formed with **not** or contractions.

Examples

- Don't you agree?
- Isn't that interesting?
- Haven't we met before?

When to use

Use to express surprise, persuasion or expectation.

When not to use

Be careful: they can sound emotional, critical or rhetorical if overused.

Alternative (choice) questions

Questions offering options with **or**.

Examples

- Do you want tea or coffee?
- Shall we meet today or tomorrow?
- Are you driving or taking the train?

When to use

Use to present clear choices.

When not to use

Avoid when more than two options are needed unless structured very clearly.

Indirect (embedded) questions

Questions are placed inside another sentence. No inversion, no question mark unless the whole sentence is a question.

Examples

- I wonder where he went.
- Could you tell me where the station is?
- Do you know why they left early?

When to use

Use for politeness and formal style.

When not to use

Do not invert the subject and auxiliary.

(Not: *Could you tell me where is the station?*)

Rhetorical questions

Questions asked for effect, not for an answer.

Examples

- Who cares?
- What difference does it make?
- How could anyone disagree?

When to use

Use in speeches, writing and persuasion.

When not to use

Avoid when real information is required.

Imperative-style questions (requests with tags)

Commands softened into questions using tags or intonation.

Examples

- Pass me the file, will you?
- Close the door, could you?
- Let's begin, shall we?

When to use

Polite instructions, classroom language, and teamwork.

When not to use

Avoid where power distance makes them seem rude or too direct.

Question fragments

Very short conversational questions without complete grammar.

Examples

- Coffee?
- Any questions?
- Really?

When to use

Informal speech where the context is already clear.

When not to use

Avoid in assessments and formal writing.

Types of Assessment Questions

Multiple Choice Questions

Vocabulary MCQ

Question:

What does the word **annual** mean?

- a. Every week
- b. Every month
- c. Every year
- d. Every day

Explanation: This question checks word meaning. The learner must understand how the word is used in context.

Punctuation/Grammar MCQ

Question:

Which sentence is punctuated correctly?

- a. The meeting however, will start at nine.
- b. The meeting, however will start at nine.
- c. The meeting, however, will start at nine.
- d. The meeting however will, start at nine.

Explanation: This question checks whether the learner can recognise correct punctuation.

They must choose the sentence that follows standard rules.

Author's Purpose MCQ

Question:

The writer's main purpose is to...

- a. entertain the reader
- b. warn people about a danger

- c. persuade readers to recycle more
- d. describe an interesting place

Explanation: Here, the learner is not looking for a single fact. They must think about why the writer wrote the text. This requires understanding the overall message.

When to use

- Testing knowledge quickly
- Checking understanding of key terms, grammar or facts
- Large classes and computer-marked exams

When not to use

- When you need detailed explanation or reasoning
- When guessing would make the result unreliable

Comprehension Questions

Questions that check understanding of a text.

Explanation

Learners read a passage and answer questions about meaning, ideas, details and purpose.

Examples

- What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
- Why did the council introduce the policy?
- What problem did the writer experience?

When to use

- Reading practice
- Assessing literal understanding and recall
- Checking if students followed the argument

When not to use

- When the focus is vocabulary only
- When students have not had time to read properly

Inference Questions

Questions where the answer is **not stated directly** but must be worked out from clues.

Explanation

Learners read between the lines, using logic and evidence.

Examples

- What can we infer about the writer's opinion?
- How does the neighbour probably feel?
- Why might the project have failed?

When to use

- Developing critical thinking
- Encouraging deeper reading
- Assessing interpretation skills

When not to use

- With texts that are too short or unclear
- When learners are still developing basic comprehension

4 True / False / Not Given Questions

Learners decide whether statements agree with the text, contradict it, or are not mentioned.

Explanation

Three outcomes:

True – False – Not Given

Examples

- The report was published last year. — T / F / NG
- The writer supports free public transport. — T / F / NG

When to use

- Encouraging precise reading

- Distinguishing fact from assumption

When not to use

- If students confuse *False* with *Not Given*
- Where information is ambiguous

Matching Questions

Learners connect two related lists (e.g. headings to paragraphs, terms to definitions).

Explanation

Students draw lines or write letters/numbers to match correctly.

Examples

- Match the heading to the paragraph.
- Match each term with its meaning.

When to use

- Vocabulary, definitions, dates, key ideas
- Summarising relationships

When not to use

- When options are too similar or confusing
- When reading load becomes too heavy

Short-Answer Questions

Questions requiring brief written responses.

Explanation

Usually one word, phrase or short sentence.

Examples

- What does the writer recommend?
- Who led the project?
- Where did the event take place?

When to use

- Checking exact understanding
- Assessing recall without guessing

When not to use

- When spelling or grammar might unfairly affect marks
- When long explanation is required

7 Fill-in-the-Blank (Cloze) Questions

Learners complete sentences by adding missing words.

Explanation

Tests grammar, vocabulary and context awareness.

Examples

- The meeting will start ____ 9 a.m.
- He has lived here ____ five years.

When to use

- Grammar and discourse markers
- Prepositions, tenses and collocations

When not to use

- Without clear context
- With more than one possible correct answer

Sequencing Questions

Questions where learners place events or steps in the correct order.

Explanation

Tests understanding of process and chronology.

Examples

- Put the steps of the recipe in order.
- Arrange the events from first to last.

When to use

- Instructions, procedures and narratives

When not to use

- When order does not affect meaning

Extended-Response Questions (Open questions)

Questions requiring longer written answers.

Explanation

Learners explain, argue, evaluate or describe.

Examples

- Do you agree with the writer's opinion? Explain.
- How could the problem be solved?
- What lessons can be learned from this situation?

When to use

- Assessing reasoning, writing and reflection
- Higher-level thinking skills

When not to use

- In timed tests with limited writing space
- With beginners lacking structure support

MCQs — Questions in English

1. Which sentence is a WH-question?
 - a. She is studying.
 - b. Are you studying?
 - c. Why are you studying?
 - d. You are studying.
2. Which sentence asks for confirmation?
 - a. What is this?
 - b. Do you like it?
 - c. Whose bag is this?
 - d. Where did you find it?
3. Choose the correct question form.
 - a. Did you went yesterday?
 - b. You went yesterday?
 - c. Went you yesterday?
 - d. Did you go yesterday?
4. Which is an example of a **tag question**?
 - a. Where are you?
 - b. You are tired, aren't you?
 - c. Are you tired?
 - d. Why are you tired?
5. Which question is **indirect**?
 - a. Where is the library?
 - b. Is the library open?
 - c. I wonder where the library is.

d. Where the library is?

6. Which sentence is correct?

- Do you are happy?
- Are you happy?
- You are happy?
- Happy you are?

7. Which shows a **negative question**?

- Did you see it?
- You saw it?
- Didn't you see it?
- Who saw it?

8. Which is a **rhetorical question**?

- What time is it?
- Who would refuse such help?
- Where are they going?
- How far is the station?

9. Which question uses **do-support** correctly?

- Do she works here?
- Does she work here?
- She does work here?
- Worked she here?

10. Which is a **subject question**?

- Who broke the vase?
- Who did break the vase?
- Who was the vase broken by?

d. Did who break the vase?

11. Choose the correct alternative question.

- a. Do you want tea or do you want coffee?
- b. You want tea or coffee?
- c. Do you want tea or coffee?
- d. Are you wanting tea or coffee?

12. Which sentence is most polite?

- a. Where is the manager?
- b. Tell me where the manager is.
- c. I want to know where the manager is.
- d. Could you tell me where the manager is?

13. Which example shows **tone (declarative) questioning?**

- a. Are you finished?
- b. When will you finish?
- c. You are finished?
- d. How did you finish?

14. Which question is **not** appropriate in formal writing?

- a. Could you clarify this point?
- b. I wonder whether this is clear.
- c. This is clear?
- d. Would you explain this further?

15. Choose the correct WH-question.

- a. What does mean this word?
- b. What this word means?
- c. What does this word mean?

d. What is mean this word?

16. Which is an **echo question**?

- a. She left early?
- b. She left early!
- c. She left early, didn't she?
- d. She left early where?

17. Which sentence is a **suggestion question**?

- a. Shall we review this again?
- b. Do you review this again?
- c. You review this again?
- d. Are you reviewing this again?

18. Which question is formed incorrectly?

- a. Are they coming?
- b. Did he call?
- c. Has she finished?
- d. Went they home?

19. Choose the best polite request.

- a. Open the door.
- b. You open the door?
- c. Open the door, will you?
- d. Open the door now.

20. Which question checks expectation or surprise?

- a. Do you agree?
- b. Why do you agree?
- c. Don't you agree?

d. Will you agree?

21. Which question fragment is natural in conversation?

a. Are you hungry?

b. Hungry?

c. You hungry?

d. Being hungry?

22. Which question is both correct and formal?

a. Where is the station at?

b. Where is the station?

c. Where the station is?

d. Where is the station, isn't it?

Jumbled Questions

you / do / usually / what / on Saturdays

she / is / why / crying / now

they / did / arrive / when / yesterday

have / ever / been / you / to Scotland

are / the report / you / finishing / today

going / where / they / are / to / stay

will / meeting / the / when / begin

has / already / the email / he / sent

were / doing / what / you / at 10 o'clock

been / long / how / you / have / waiting

can / this / explain / you / to me

have / repaired / yet / been / the computers

she / to work / driving / is / still

should / report / the problem / we / to IT

was / who / the presentation / preparing

Dialogue (Teacher = T, Student = S)

Complete the dialogue with one of the options given at the end of this activity.

T: [1]

S: Yes, I've finished the worksheet on forming questions.

T: [2]

S: The most difficult part was remembering when to use *do* and when not to.

T: [3]

S: I think WH-questions are easier, because they feel more natural.

T: [4]

S: Sure. For example: "Where did you park the car?"

T: [5]

S: Oh, that's a subject question. We don't use *do* there.

T: [6]

S: Right — we use them when we expect the answer to be yes or no.

T: [7]

S: We ask, "Could you tell me where the office is?" instead of "Where is the office?"

T: [8]

S: Negative questions sound stronger, sometimes surprised: “Don’t you agree?”

T: [9]

S: Alternative questions give choices, like “Tea or coffee?”

T: [10]

S: I feel much more confident, but I still need more practice with intonation.

Options for Each Blank (Choose ONE per number)

[1]

- a. Have you finished your homework?
- b. Did you mark the tests?
- c. Are you free after class?

[2]

- a. What was the easiest part?
- b. What did you find most difficult?
- c. How long did it take?

[3]

- a. Which type of question do you prefer?
- b. Why are questions important?
- c. Who taught you WH-questions?

[4]

- a. Can you give me an example?
- b. Do you remember the rules?
- c. Will you read the sentence?

[5]

- a. Why is that a mistake?
- b. What kind of question is that?
- c. Who told you that rule?

[6]

- a. When do we use tag questions?
- b. How do rhetorical questions work?
- c. What are yes/no questions used for?

[7]

- a. How do we make polite questions?
- b. Why do we avoid contractions?
- c. When do we use statements?

[8]

- a. How do negative questions sound?
- b. Who uses negative questions?
- c. Where do we place *not*?

[9]

- a. What are alternative questions?
- b. Where do we use fragments?
- c. When do they repeat?

[10]

- a. Do you feel more confident now?
- b. Will you stay after class?
- c. Did you finish the book?