

# QUESTIONS ABOUT QUESTIONS

Asking (and answering) questions is one of the most basic tasks in all languages. Questions can be used to start a conversation, learn new information and /or inquire about something. It is also one of the most difficult tasks for learners of English since English has its certain rules on question formation. In some cases, it inverts the subject and auxiliary verb in the interrogative form, but in others it requires a specific word order, and this is where most problems begin.

There are a few different question types in English: subject question, object question, indirect question and question tags. The examples of each type are the following:

- a) **Subject question:** Who wrote 'Hamlet'?
- b) **Object question:** What play did Shakespeare write?
- c) **Indirect question:** Could you tell me what play Shakespeare wrote?
- d) **Question tags:** Shakespeare wrote 'Hamlet', didn't he?

The most usual problem occurs with subject and object questions where an auxiliary verb plays an important role- in object questions it is obligatory (e.g. What play **did** he write?), while in subject questions it is omitted (e.g. Who wrote 'Hamlet?', **not** Who did write 'Hamlet?').

The second most frequent mistake English learners make is in indirect questions, where the word order is extremely important: e.g. 'Could you tell me where the nearest bus stop is? And not 'Could you tell me where is the nearest bus stop?.'

## 1. Can you identify which type are the following questions: subject (S), object (O), indirect (I) or question tag (QT)?

- How often do you go to the cinema?
- Could you please tell me where the museum is?
- Who loves Peter?
- You have been to England, haven't you?
- Which type of car goes 250 m.p.h.?

Key: 1O, 2I, 3S, 4QT, 5S

One tip that can help you when forming a question in English is the use of the acronyms QUASI and ASI:

**QUASI** stands for Question word- Auxiliary- Subject- Infinitive

e.g. *Who did you see in the office?*  
(question word) (auxiliary) (subject) (infinitive)

**ASI** stands for: Auxiliary- Subject - Infinitive

e.g. *Do you smoke?*  
(auxiliary) (subject) (infinitive)

## 2. Which of these questions are QUASI and which ones ASI?

- Have you seen Susan lately?
- How many employees does your company have?
- Did you send that report last Friday?
- Where did you find those suppliers?
- Do they work in your department?

Key: 1ASI, 2QUASI, 3ASI, 4QUASI, 5ASI

## 3. Put the following words in order to make a question. Remember to conjugate the verbs and add an auxiliary verb if required.

- he/who/visit/last week/ ?
- him/invite/who/dinner/to/yesterday?
- what/you/TV/buy?
- know / who / do / sign / report / you / this?
- fight / the American Revolution/ who / the British / during?
- most / the / which / have / language / words?

Key: 1. Who did he visit last week?, 2. Who invited him to dinner yesterday?, 3. What TV did you buy?, 4. Do you know who signed this report?, 5. Who fought the British during the American Revolution?, 6. Which language has the most words?

## 4. Ask an appropriate question for the response. In the first exercise an example question is given.

- A steak, please. - 'What would you like?'
- Oh, I stayed at home and watched TV. - \_\_\_\_\_
- She is reading a book at the moment. - \_\_\_\_\_
- We are going to visit France. - \_\_\_\_\_
- I usually get up at 7 o'clock. - \_\_\_\_\_
- No, he is single. - \_\_\_\_\_

Possible questions: 2. What did you do last night/last weekend?, 3. What is she doing?, 4. Where are you going for your next holiday?, 5. When do you usually get up?, 6. Is he married?



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