

English grammar: Indirect questions

If we want to make questions in the English language, we can do it by changing the word order (*Is he your brother? Was she there? Have you been to Ireland?*) or by using the auxiliary *do* (*Do you know them? Does he live with you? Did you enjoy it?*).

The **indirect questions** are not normal questions. They have the same word order as statements and we do not use *do* to form a question. They usually come after introductory phrases combined with interrogative pronouns and adjectives (*who, whom, what, which, whose*), adverbs (*when, where, how, why*) or *if, whether*.

Compare the following **direct and indirect questions**:

Direct: *What did she want?* - Indirect: *Do you know what she wanted?*

Direct: *Where was it?* - Indirect: *Do you remember where it was?*

Direct: *Will they come?* - Indirect: *I wonder if they will come.*

We can use many other introductory phrases to start the indirect questions, e. g. *I ask, I wonder, I want/would like to know, I can't remember, I have no idea, I am sure* etc. or they can be introduced by direct questions such as *Can you tell me, Do you know, Do you remember, Have you any idea* etc.

Look at more examples to understand how we change the direct questions into the indirect questions:

How much is it? - *I'd like to know how much it is.*

Is this seat free? - *He is asking if this seat is free.*

Where did she go? - *Have you any idea where she went?*

Does he want to buy it? - *Do you know whether he wants to buy it?*

The indirect questions are more common in English than in some other languages. They are more polite and more formal than the direct questions. Compare the following examples of the direct - indirect questions.

Why did you do it? - *Could you tell me why you did it?*

Could I use your telephone? - *Do you think I could use your telephone?*

Are you married? - *I wonder if you are married.*