

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.

Direct question – indirect question:

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.*