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English - I (Basic English)
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Lecture 52
Structure of Question Sentences

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STRUCTURE OF QUESTION SENTENCES

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- In many languages that we know of, there are no special rules for forming questions. In English, however, question sentences are formed in only one of the two ways.



Good afternoon, today we are going to talk about in the rest of this unit interrogative sentences in English. In many languages that we know of Hindi, Tamil many other Asian languages African languages there are no special rules for forming questions. You can say “jaatey ho kya? Kya

jaatey ho” that is enough. You add a question word or sometimes you raise the tone of your voice (Taxi aagai?).

You do not even have to say “kya” but not in English. In English however, question sentences or interrogative sentences are formed in only one of the two ways. What are the two ways? Let us go next.

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- Either, they start with “Is/was/Am/Are/were” or some other auxiliary verb, such as in the following sentences:

- *Is he joining the university this year?*
- *Are they going on a holiday together?*
- *Was this shop here last year?*
- *Have you paid the last installment for this house?*
- *Did they not know the rules?*



Number one; either these sentences all interrogative, all question sentences start with is, was, am, are, were or some other auxiliary verb such as in the following sentences; you see, is he joining the university this year? Are they going on holiday together? Was this shop here last year? Have you paid the last instalment for this house? Did they not know the rules? So either they start some interrogative sentences start with auxiliary verbs, helping verbs. Next.

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- Or, they start with some “wh-” word, like “how, what, when, where, which, whose, whom, why” and a few other “wh-” words, such as the following.

- *How are you going to pay for this car?*
- *What is your name?*
- *When is the cargo likely to be delivered?*
- *Where do you live?*

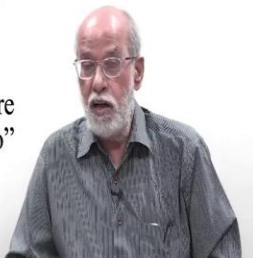


Or, some other interrogative sentences start with wh-word, like how, what, when, where, which, whose, whom, why and a few other wh-words, such as the following. How are you going to pay for this car? What is your name? Etcetera, okay?

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- Notice that “How” does not begin with “wh-”, yet it is grouped with questions words of this class, That is only for the sake of convenience. Since all other words here begin with “Wh-”, this word is also clubbed with them.
- What is the difference between questions beginning with “Is/are” and the questions beginning with “Wh-”?
- Depending upon what they begin with, they are either called “Wh-” questions, or “Yes/No” questions. This seems arbitrary.

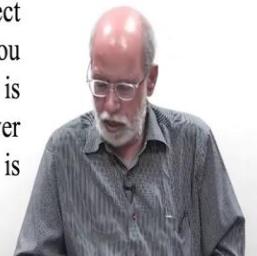


Notice that how is not a wh-word, yet it is grouped with questions words of this class that is purely for the sake of convenience. Since all other words here begins with wh- and this is about the only different words. So many grammarians say many teachers of English grammar clubbed them together in the same class that is what about it all.

Otherwise you can ask what is the difference between questions beginning with is or that is an auxiliary verb and the questions beginning with wh-words like the once we saw above. Depending upon what they begin with, they are either called wh- questions, or yes/ no questions this seems arbitrary. Next.

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- Questions beginning with “Is/Are/...” are almost always answered in either “yes” or “no”. Actually, therefore, they should rather be called “yes/no” answers, than “yes/no” questions. But popular psychology and rule of convenience put them that way.
- “Wh-” questions, on the other hand, expect specific answers. You can not say “yes” when you are asked “what is the time, please?”, or, “What is your name, please?”. You will have to answer these questions with specific words like It is 10:10 now, or, I am Shreesh, etc.



Questions beginning with is, are; are almost always answered in either yes or no. Actually, therefore, they should rather be called yes/no answers than yes/ no questions. But popular psychology and rule of convenience put them that way. That is why they are called yes/ no questions. Otherwise strictly speaking if one is wh- questions then the others should be called helping verbs questions or auxiliary verb questions.

Wh- questions, on the other hand, expect, what we call yes/ no questions expect answers either in yes or in no but what we call wh- questions, on the other hand, expect specific answers in different words. You cannot say yes to a question like what is the time, please? Can you say yes? Someone asks you what is the time, please? And you say yes, no, you do not do that.

You will have to answer these questions with specific words like if somebody asks you what is the time, please? You say it is 10:10 or it is 3 pm or if they ask you what your name is? You say I am Shreesh et cetera. You answer these questions not with yes or no, but you answer these questions with specific words. Words of, words could be a noun; words could be anything else, right?

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- So let us first talk about the structure of “Yes/No” questions. All questions of this kind begin with the first auxiliary verb in that sentence. See the following, for instance.

- *Are you coming to the class tomorrow?*
- *Have you been coming to the class these days?*
- *Can the classes be conducted online for primary school students?*
- *Could people have been told about the pandemic last year?*



So let us now first talk about the structure of yes/ no questions. How are these questions constructed? What is the rule? Actually, all questions of this kind begin with a first auxiliary verb in that sentence. See the following, for instance. Are you coming to the class tomorrow? Have you been coming to the class these days? Can the classes be etcetera you go on like that from inside the sentence you take the first auxiliary verb you bring it to the front of the sentence, and you get a yes/ no question sentence. Go to the next.

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- In all of these sentences there are many auxiliary verbs. Some books of grammar also call them helping verbs.
- If sentences mentioned above were to be written as assertive sentences, or as sentences making statements, then they would be rewritten as follows.



That is the rule, in all of these sentences, sometimes there are many auxiliary verbs. Sometimes there are only one some books also call helping verbs as auxiliary verbs they have various names. Auxiliary verbs, helping verbs or tense bearing verbs et cetera. If sentences mentioned above were to be written as assertive sentences, or as sentences making statements, then they would be rewritten as follows. How? Next.

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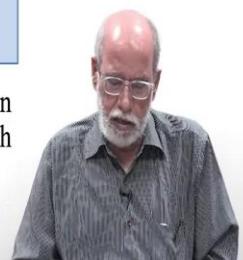


You are coming to the class tomorrow.

- The verbal group has two full words, and “+ing”, but because the order is fixed, the question sentence here begins with the first of them, that is “Are”.

You have been coming to the class these days.

- The verbal group has three words, “ have been come+ing”, but the question sentence begins with “Have”, which comes first.



This, you are coming to the class tomorrow? And the question is are has been fronted, and you get are you coming to the class tomorrow? That is it. So the verbal group here has three word or

words particles. Here in you are coming you have two, you have are and coming. So the first is taken away in the next you have three. You may have, have then come and ing, see next.

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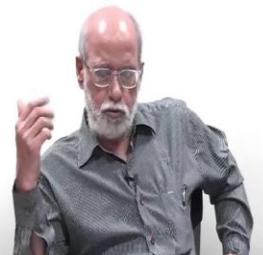
Classes can be conducted on line for primary school students.



- The verbal group here has three words, “can be conduct+ed”, but because “Can” comes first in the group, the question sentence in this case also begins with “Can”.

People could have been told about the pandemic last year.

- Verbal group has four words, “could have been tell + ed”, but because the group begins with “Could”, the questions sentence is formed accordingly, beginning with “could”.



So, for example, you have been coming in a sentence like you have been coming, so what would you take to the front? Have not been because been comes after have, not coming because coming is the third in number. So, for example, look at this thing. Classes can be conducted. The verb here the verbal group, the group which has words that together make verb is called verbal group.

The verbal group here has three words can be, conduct plus ed conducted. But which is the first word? The word here is can, so it goes to the front of the sentence, and the question is can classes be conducted online for primary school students. It is possible sometimes that verbal group has more than three words. Look at this sentence; people could have been told about the pandemic last year.

How many words in the verbal group? Could, have, been, told we have underlined them. Now it is mechanically you just have to take the first word to the front of the sentence, and then it says yes/ no type question sentence. You get could people have been told. Next.

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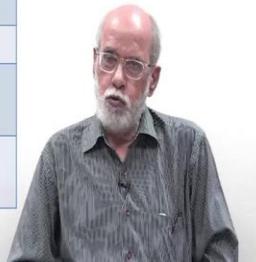
ACTIVITY 1



- See the following table. The first column has sentences in the assertive, or declarative form. Writing in the second column in the table below, make “Yes/No” question sentences out of them.

Forming Question Sentences

| Declarative Sentences | Question Sentences |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Father of Rajam is a policeman. | |
| His answers would be powerful. | |
| You are saying it just to please me. | |
| The tailor has been asking for money. | |



See the following table, for instance. The first column that is the column on my left has assertive sentences, or as some books call them declarative sentences. If the second column you can write in the table below in the second column, you can make a yes/ no question for these sentences. Suppose these sentences were answer to a question of this kind.

Sorry so you can make even, you can make a yes/ no type questions out of these. You can say; is the father of Rajam is a policeman. You cannot say, are the father of Rajam. Just take the first auxiliary verb out. Is the father of Rajam a policeman? So similarly, would his answers be powerful? Same way, once again are you telling you just to please me. Or has the tailor been asking for money?

So you know mechanically even a computer can do it. You can take the first word of the verbal group, the tense bearing word out to the front of the sentence and then adjust a way to stays as it is it becomes a question sentence.

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| | |
|--|--|
| You will give me your attention. | |
| Your father has asked you to stay at home. | |
| Rajam had known that his friends were waiting. | |
| Rajam had seen his father doing it. | |



Same way here, go next.

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ANSWERS

| Declarative Sentences | Question Sentences |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Father of Rajam is a policeman. | Is father of Rajam a policeman? |
| His answers would be powerful. | Would his answers be powerful? |
| You are saying it just to please me. | Are you are saying so just to please me? |
| The tailor has been asking for money. | Has the tailor been asking for money? |



| | |
|--|--|
| You will give me your attention. | Will you give me your attention? |
| Your father has asked you to stay at home. | Has your father asked you to stay at home? |
| Rajam had known that his friends were waiting. | Had Rajam known that his friends were waiting? |
| Rajam had seen his father doing it. | Had Rajam had seen his father doing it? |



Here are the answers, you can compare your answers with the ones given here. Next.

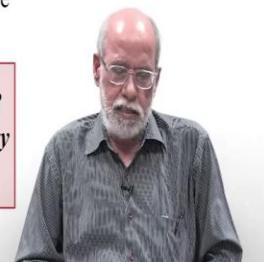
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- There are some “yes/no” questions which begin with “Do/does/did” even when they are not obviously there in the declarative sentence. Look at the following sentences, for instance.

- a. Devadutt rises with the sun every morning.
b. Devadutt does not go to bed with the sun every evening.*

- Questions for the sentences given above can be of the following kind.

- a. Does Devadutt rises with the sun every morning?
b. Does Devadutt not go to bed with the sun every evening?*



There are some yes/no type questions which do not begin with a given auxiliary verb. They begin with do or does. What kind of sentences are those, say for instance look at the two examples here before me the shaded ones the highlighted ones; Devadutt rises with the sun every morning. Now there is no auxiliary verb there. So what do you take to the front? In that case what you do is you insert a do, or does, or did.

If it is past tense, then it is did. If the subject is the singular number, then does. If the subject is the plural number, them do. So because Devadutt is in the singular number, so we use does. Does Devadutt rise with the sun every morning? In the second line, there is no such problem because

there is does already there. Devadutt does not go to bed with the sun every evening. So here it is mechanical does Devadutt not go to bed with the sun every morning. Next.

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- a. *Devadutt rises with the sun every morning.*
- b. *Devadutt **does** not go to bed with the sun every evening.*

- In b., the first word of the verbal group is “does”. So it is all right if the question for this sentence begins with “Does”. But questions sentence for “a.” will also begin with “Does”, producing the question as shown in the previous slide.



So in b, the first word of the verbal group is does. So it is all right if the question for this sentence begins with does. But questions sentence for a, that is Devadutt rises with the sun every morning begins with does and because there is nothing there. We have to insert a do, or did, or does from the lexicon, from the dictionary, from our mind into the sentence and then bring it to the front and did the question sentence. Next

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- So the second rule for the construction of question sentences is that a sentence that does not have a stand alone auxiliary verb can use “do/does/did” as appropriate to begin a “yes/no” question with. See the following for example.

- a. *Pindaruch gets rains between June and October every year.*
- b. *It rains in November and December in Chennai.*
- c. *The Baghmati river is flooded every year in July.*
- d. *But the Bay of Bengal can never be in flood.*



So, the first rule was to bring the auxiliary verb to the front and get a yes/no type question, yes/no answer type question. The second rule is if there is no auxiliary verb visible auxiliary verb in that sentence, then what do you do? The second rule, therefore, is for the construction of question sentences is that a sentence that does not have a stand-alone auxiliary verb that does not that is not visible by itself. Can use do, or does, or did as appropriate to begin a yes/no question sentence with say for example here.

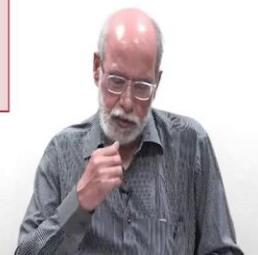
Pindaruch gets rains between June and October every year. This is a village in Bihar the village gets rain between June and October every year. Now you question it, how do you do that? There is no obvious stand-alone auxiliary verb there. So you insert a do, or does from your own side, and here you get, does Pindaruch get now you cannot say does gets because the singular marker has already moved and attached itself to the auxiliary verb you have inserted at the beginning of the sentence.

So in order to simple; does Pindaruch get rains between June and October every year? Or you can go mechanically like that. Next.

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- Helping verbs, “is” and “can”, are seen in c. and d. But in a. and d. no such verb is seen. To change them into question sentences, therefore, English uses “do/does/did”, as appropriate.

- a. *Does Pindaruch get rains between June and October every year?*
- b. *Does it rain in November and December in Chennai?*
- c. *Is the Baghmati river flooded every year in July?*
- d. *But can the Bay of Bengal never be in flood?*



Helping verbs is and can are seen in earlier sentences but in a and d no such verb is seen that is why we have used do and does there. If you want to change them into question sentences; therefore, English uses do, does, did like here. Does Pindaruch, does it rain, is the Bagmati you can construct as I told you yesterday.

It is good for us to sometimes to create exercises for ourselves. I have also told you how we can create exercises go to any authentic book, a book of stories, book of knowledge of other kinds, books in science and history and philosophy and take a paragraph and try and see how you can get make questions there. If they already are questions and remove the question word and then after a while, try and redo them.

If you are able to get them right, then you have got them right that is the wonderful way of doing some self-created exercises. Like a selfie, you appreciate or criticize yourself better in a selfie than when somebody else shoots your photographs. So the same thing here when you create that exercise your learning will be much greater. Go next.

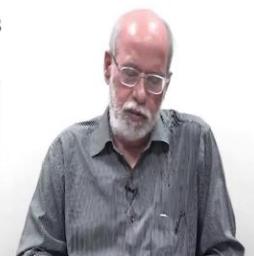
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- So we see that sentences that do not have a helping verb to be taken the front of the sentence use “do'/does/did”, as appropriate for this purpose.
- How does English make negative questions, such as the following.

- a. Do Eskimos not live near the North Pole?
b. Does a man not go out for morning walks in cold countries?*

- Ordinarily, in their neutral, declarative form sentences as above. Are like those given below.

- a. Eskimos do not live near the North Pole.
b. A man does not go out for morning walks in cold countries.*



So those sentences that do not have a helping verb take do, does et cetera. How about negative questions? How do you get questions out of does not, do not. Do not things like Eskimos does not live. How would you get the question does Eskimos? It is once again like that, look at this sentence; do Eskimos not live near the North Pole? What is the declarative sentence? The declarative sentence here is Eskimos do not live near the North Pole.

Does a man not go out for morning walks in cold countries? A declarative form is a man does not go out for morning walks in cold countries. Not always, some people do. Next.

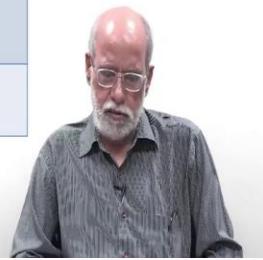
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ACTIVITY 2



- Make some question sentences out of the declarative sentences given in the table below.

| Declarative Sentence | Question Sentence |
|--|-------------------|
| Early bird get the worm | |
| John does not like history. | |
| Geometry attracts Maya most. | |
| Money cannot be the only factor in Job Choice. | |



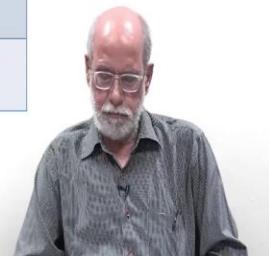
Do this activity make some question sentences out of the declarative sentences given here. Is all mechanical just ask yourself, does it have an auxiliary verb? If yes bring it to the first, if it does not then ask yourself if you to take do, or does, or did. Next

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ANSWERS



| Declarative Sentence | Question Sentence |
|--|---|
| Early bird gets the worm | Does early bird get the worm? |
| John does not like history. | Does John not like history? |
| Geometry attracts Maya most. | Does geometry attract Maya most? |
| Money cannot be the only factor in Job Choice. | Can money be the only factor in job choice? |



Here are the answers. Next.

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- So the Rule of Forming Question Sentences remains unchanged, namely,



1. To form “yes/no” questions, the first helping verb is taken to the beginning of the sentence.
2. Where there is no visible helping verb, an appropriate form of “DO/Does/Did” is used.



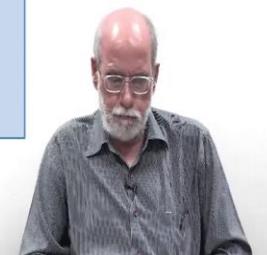
Next. This is the rule. Next.

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How are “Wh-” questions formed ? Almost the same way, except that the “Wh-” word is used before the auxiliary verb. See the following sentences. What could be their normal declarative forms.



- a. *What is your name?*
- b. *When does the sun rise here in Chennai in winter?*
- c. *Why do people value more than any other wealth?*
- d. *Which road leads to Mathura?*
- e. *Where did Hanuman find Sita?*
- f. *How did Shri Ram pass time away from Sita?*
- g. *What is not available in this store?*



How are wh- questions formed? Pretty once again no difficulty at all you bring wh- before in yes/no type questions. We used the auxiliary verb first. But in wh- question type questions we use wh-word first. So if you want to ask somebody what their name is. You just ask what is your name? So what is then your name or you want to know the time when the sun rises. You want to do that kind of thing then pretty simple when does the sunrise here in Chennai in winter?

A lot of people say Chennai has a 12 hour day and 12 hour night or through the year maybe there is some minor difference. So the rule here is to bring wh-word before auxiliary verb. And you will get the question sentence right. Next.

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- a. My name is Ruth, Ruth O'Hara.
- b. In winter, the sun rises in Chennai at 5:42 in winter.
- c. There are reasons why people value money more than wealth.
- d. This road leads to Mathura.
- e. Hanuman found Sita under a tree in Ravan's garden.
- f. Shri Rama spent time with the priests and in matters of state.
- g. Ethnic dishes are not available in this store.



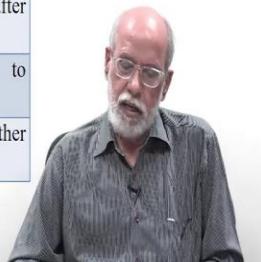
How can you question it? So, for example, to get the answer in a, your question could be, what is your name please? You can also ask what is your full name, Ruth? And Ruth might ask you my name is Ruth O'Hara. You can also ask the same question once again. When does the sunrise in winter in Chennai? And the answer will be in winter the sun rises in Chennai at 42 minutes past 5 in winter.

You can form questions that way the rules once again being if you want wh- questions then wh-word followed by helping verb or auxiliary verb then rest of the sentence. If you want yes/no type question, then bring the helping verb to the front of the sentence. If there is no obvious helping verb, then you insert do and does, do, or does, or did, and you get it. The practice is the clue. Go next.

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- Each “Wh-” word does a specific function, as given in the table below.

| Wh-Word | Function | Example |
|---------|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| How | Manner | How do you go to college daily? |
| What | Question about Noun | What is your name ? |
| When | Question about time | When can you meet the students? |
| Where | Question about place | Where does the sun go after sunset? |
| Which | Question about noun | Which road do you take to town? |
| Why | Reason, Purpose | Why do you want to buy another flat? |



Look at these things the given what you can use for what you can use when usually for human nouns you use who or what not which. So when, where, why, which lookup dictionary there may be more to it then we have been able to say. Look at the books we have suggested do them, and in no time you will have a grip on these things. And a lot of people in India make mistakes like though they do not invert the verb.

They do not bring the auxiliary verb to the front of the sentence. Rather than say, has the taxi arrived? They say the taxi has arrived maybe your friends can understand you. Those who are used to your voice can understand you. But those who are not used to your voice will have great difficulty understanding you. Are you making a statement the taxi has arrived or are you asking the question?

In English, it is always best to switch the helping verb to the front of the sentence and ask has the taxi arrived? Or if you have wh-word, you can ask when is the taxi going to arrive? Or when did the taxi arrived? If it arrived long ago and you did not know. Go slow, speak slowly, get time to think, and do this practice with some practice, you will realize that you are not only able to get rid of non-standard habits of the speech. You will also become a more confident speaker and writer of English. Next.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:22)

ACTIVITY 3



- Form questions with these “Wh-” words.



Thank you!



Okay before we finish. Once again, as I have been telling you in every unit, the classes here are like a coach session. We only try to tell you what is the minimum you must do to understand and learn what you want to learn, but actual learning can occur only after you do some work, some practice on your own using the books that we have suggested—listening to good authentic audio and visual recordings on television, documentaries films, radio news, television news other bulletins.

And you will no time find that you are a more confident speaker, you are a correct speaker or writer, and you are a source of comfort and knowledge also to others. Thank you very much. Have a good day.