

ask¹

S1 W1

/ɑːsk \$ æsk/

verb

- 1** ASK A QUESTION **question** [intransitive and transitive] to speak or write to someone in order to get an answer, information, or a solution:

'What's your name?' she asked.

Don't ask him – he won't know.

*That kid's always **asking** awkward **questions**.*

ask who/what/where etc

I asked him where he lived.

ask somebody something

We'll have to ask someone the way to the station.

ask somebody if/whether

Go and ask Tom whether he's coming tonight.

ask (somebody) about something

Visitors usually ask about the history of the castle.

ask around (= ask in a lot of places or ask a lot of people)

I'll ask around, see if I can find you a place to stay.

- 2** ASK FOR SOMETHING/ASK SOMEBODY TO DO SOMETHING **for help/advice etc**

[intransitive and transitive] to make a request for help, advice, information etc:

If you need anything, you only have to ask.

ask somebody to do something

Ask John to mail those letters tomorrow.

ask to do something

Karen asked to see the doctor.

ask for

Some people find it difficult to ask for help.

ask somebody for something

He repeatedly asked Bailey for the report.

ask (somebody) if/whether you can do something

Ask your mom if you can come with us.

ask that

Was it too much to ask that he be allowed some privacy?

3 **ask price** [transitive] to want a particular amount of money for something you are selling:

How much is he asking?

ask \$50/\$1,000 etc for something

He's asking £2,000 for his car.

They're asking a fortune for that house.

4 **invite** [transitive usually + adverb/preposition] to invite someone to your home, to go out with you etc:

ask somebody to do something

Let's ask them to have dinner with us some time.

ask somebody out (= ask someone, especially someone of the opposite sex, to go to a film, a restaurant etc with you)

Jerry's too scared to ask her out.

ask somebody in (= invite someone into your house, office etc)

Don't leave them standing on the doorstep – ask them in!

ask somebody over/round (= invite someone to come to your home)

We must ask our new neighbours over for a drink.

5 **demand** [transitive] if you ask something of someone, you want them to do it for you:

It would be better if he cooperated, but perhaps I'm asking too much.

ask something of somebody

You have no right to ask anything of me.

Expecting the children to do an hour's homework after school is asking a lot of them.

6 I/you can't/couldn't ask for a better something (also I/you can't/couldn't ask for more)

used to say that you are very happy with what you have or with a situation:

I couldn't ask for a better boss.

7 be asking for trouble SENSIBLE

to do something that is very likely to have a bad effect or result:

Saying that to a feminist is just asking for trouble.

8 ask yourself something FIND OUT

to think carefully and honestly about something:

You have to ask yourself where your responsibilities really lie.

SPOKEN PHRASES

9 if you ask me

used to emphasize your own opinion:

He's just plain crazy, if you ask me.

10 don't ask me NOT KNOW

used to say you do not know the answer to something:

'Where's she gone then?' 'Don't ask me!'

11 don't ask

used to say that something is too embarrassing or strange to explain:

'What was that woman selling?' 'Don't ask.'

12 be asking for it DESERVE

used to say that someone deserves something bad that happens to them:

It's his own fault he got hit – he was asking for it.

13 be somebody's for the asking

ASK FOR SOMETHING/ASK SOMEBODY TO DO SOMETHING (informal)

if something is yours for the asking, you can have it if you want it:

The job was hers for the asking.

COLLOCATIONS – Meaning 2

nouns

ask for help *Don't be afraid to ask for help.*

ask for assistance (= help or support) *You can call this number to ask for assistance.*

ask for advice/ask somebody's advice *If you are in any doubt, ask for advice.*

ask for information *I wrote asking for information about language classes.*

ask for directions (= instructions how to get from one place to another) *At the station he asked for directions to the museum.*

ask for details *Please ask for details of the full range of tickets available.*

ask for somebody's opinion *Dad always liked being asked for his opinion.*

ask for somebody's support *Labour councillors asked for our support for the proposal.*

ask for permission *The two men entered without bothering to ask for permission.*

ask for an explanation *When he asked for an explanation, no one could give him an answer.*

THESAURUS

ask a question

ask to speak or write to someone to get an answer: *Did you ask about the price? | They asked me a lot of questions.*

inquire/enquire /ɪn'kwaɪə \$ -'kwair/ (formal) to ask someone for information about something: *I'm writing to inquire*

about the job that was advertised in yesterday's 'Times'.

demand (especially written) to ask a question in a firm or angry way: *'Why didn't you call me?', she demanded.*

interview to ask someone questions, to find out if they are suitable for a job, or as part of a television or radio interview: *When they interviewed me for the job, they didn't mention the salary. | David Letterman has interviewed all the stars.*

poll to officially ask a lot of people in order to find out their opinion on something: *Over 1,000 people were polled for the report. | 64% of the people we polled said that they approved of the way the government had handled the crisis.*

to ask someone about a crime

question/interview to ask someone a lot of questions in order to get information about a crime: *He was arrested and questioned by the police. | Detectives are interviewing the father of the missing girl.*

interrogate to ask someone a lot of detailed questions, often in an aggressive way: *The men were interrogated by the US authorities for over six hours.*

cross-examine to ask someone questions in court about the statements they made: *A second lawyer began to cross-examine the witness.*

somebody is helping the police with their inquiries (formal) used in news reports when saying that the police are asking someone questions about a crime – especially when they think this person is guilty, but have not yet charged them: *He is helping the police with their inquiries in connection with the murder of Diane Jones.*

to ask for something

ask for to tell someone you want them to give you something: *I'm going to ask for a pay rise.*

order to ask for food or drink in a restaurant: *We ordered some more coffee.* | *Have you ordered yet?*

demand to ask for something in a firm way, insisting that someone gives you what you ask for: *They're demanding immediate payment.* | *If the goods are faulty, you can demand a refund.*

request (formal) to ask for something: *The pilot requested permission to land.* | *I enclose the information you requested.*

beg/ plead to ask for something in an urgent way, because you want it very much and will be very unhappy if you do not get it: *He begged me for some money.* | *I'm not going to plead for forgiveness.*

nag/ pester to keep asking someone for something, in an annoying way: *She keeps nagging me for a new phone.* | *People were pestering him for his autograph.*

ask after somebody

phrasal verb

(BrE)

if you ask after someone, you want to know whether they are well, what they are doing etc:

I spoke to James today. He was asking after you.

ask for somebody

phrasal verb

if you ask for someone, you want to speak to them:

There's someone at the door asking for Dad.

ask²

noun

a big ask

a situation in a sports competition when someone needs to get a lot of

points or do something very difficult in order to win:

We need to win the next three games. It's a big ask, but I'm confident we can do it.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

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