

GRAMMAR

Reporting questions

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_1112G

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can report *yes/no* questions in English.
- I can report *wh-* questions in English.



Warm-up

Imagine you meet your classmates at a party. **Ask** questions to get to know each other!



Where are you from?

What do you do for a living?

Do you have any children?

Where are you living at the moment?

Reading

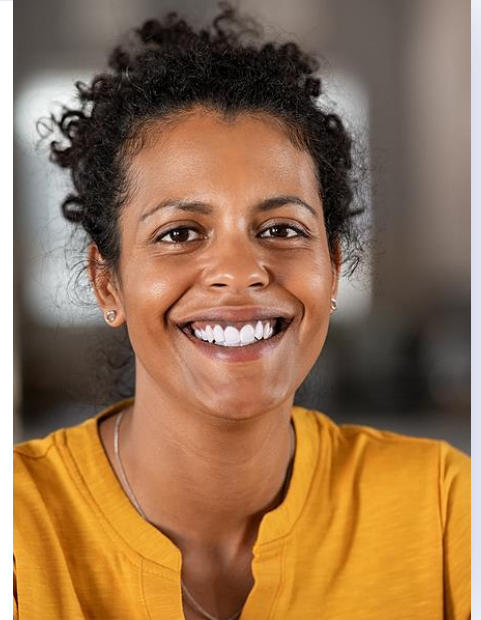
It's **Sylvia**'s first day at *Bountiful Books*. After taking her first order over the phone, she talks to her manager, **Anna**, about how it went. Read the text and answer the questions.

Anna: So, Sylvia. How did your first call go?

Sylvia: It went pretty well, I think, but the customer, Mrs Thompson, asked a couple of strange questions that I wasn't sure how to answer.

Anna: Ah, yes! Mrs Thompson. She's a regular customer of ours. She can be a bit difficult! What did she want?

Sylvia: Well, she asked if we had a first edition copy of *The Alchemist* in Portuguese.



1. Where do Sylvia and Anna work?
2. Who is Mrs. Thompson?

Reading

Continue reading the dialogue and **answer** the questions in the red box

Anna: Oh dear... She should know by now that we don't stock any first editions! If she calls and asks about that again, could you kindly remind her of that?

Sylvia: She also asked where she could buy a first edition and whether I knew the name or number of another seller for her to contact.

Anna: And what did you say to that?

Sylvia: I told her that I couldn't recommend any other sellers. I then offered her the second edition copy that we have in stock.

Anna: Very good, Sylvia. Let's hope she doesn't call back asking for another rare book anytime soon!



3. Does the bookshop have the book that Mrs. Thompson wants?
4. Is Anna happy with how Sylvia handled the phone call?

We don't **stock** any first editions.

I offered her the second edition copy that we do have **in stock**.



When we talk about the products that a shop or a business sells, we often use **these phrases**.

Can you think of any synonyms for them?

Asking a question

Read this short dialogue and **answer** the questions.



Do you have a first edition copy of *The Alchemist*?



No, I'm afraid we don't.

- Who is Sylvia speaking to on the phone?
- This is an example of **direct speech**. This is the conversation that took place on the phone.



Reporting a question

Read this example from the text and answer the questions in the blue box.



What did Mrs Thompson ask you?



**She asked if we had
a first edition copy of *The Alchemist*.**

- Sylvia now **reports** what Mrs Thompson asked her on the phone.
- This is called **reported speech**. We say what someone else said.



Categorise the sentence

Put each sentence into the correct category.

- 1 She asked if I worked in customer service.
- 2 Do you work in sales and marketing?
- 3 He asked if I liked Brazilian coffee.
- 4 Do you watch football much?
- 5 Could you do me a favour?

Direct speech

Reported speech

Reporting *yes/no* questions

Read the example sentences below, then **complete** the blue boxes.

**Mrs Thompkins asked if we had
a first edition copy of *The Alchemist*.**

**She also asked whether I knew the name
or number of a seller for her to contact.**

- We use the verb *to* _____ to report a yes/no question. It is usually in the past simple tense.
- We follow this verb with *if* or _____ to report a yes/no question.

To report a yes/no question:

- Remove *do* or *does* from the original question.
- Put the verb in the question in the past. *Have* ---> *had* and *know* --> *knew*.
- Use normal word order for sentences, ending with a full stop (.), not a question mark (?).
- Remember to change the pronouns.

Fill in the gaps

Transform the direct speech into reported speech. Put your verb **in the past!**

e.g. "Do you play tennis?" she asked. > She asked if I **played** tennis.

Direct speech

Reported speech

"Are you in marketing?" she asked.

She asked if I _____ in marketing.

"Do you have any children?" he asked.

He asked if I _____ any children.

"Do you do yoga regularly?" they asked.

They asked if I _____ yoga regularly.

"Can you stop talking?" she asked.

She asked if I _____ stop talking.

"Will you open the door?" he asked.

He asked if I _____ open the door.



Practise reporting yes/no questions

1. **Fill in** the gap with the correct verb. Be careful with your **tenses**!
2. **Compare** your answers (in breakout rooms or in the classroom).

1 "Do you _____ at the weekends?" she asked.
She asked if I _____ at the weekends.

2 "_____ you meet at 3?" he asked.
He asked if I _____ meet at 3.

3 "_____ you a football fan?" she asked.
She asked if I _____ a football fan.

4 "Does Jennifer _____ meat?" he asked.
He asked whether Jennifer _____ meat.

5 "_____ you stop at the supermarket?" she asked.
She asked whether I _____ stop at the supermarket.

can
eat
will
be
work

More reported questions

Read the examples below and **answer** the questions.



Mrs Thompson asked **where** she could buy a first edition.



Anna asked **what** Mrs. Thompson wanted.

- What **direct questions** did Mrs. Thompson and Anna ask Sylvia?
- Are these examples of wh-questions or yes/no questions?



Transform the questions

Transform into reported questions. Don't forget your **wh-question word**!

1 "How are you?" she asked.



2 "Which plant is your favourite?" he asked.



3 "Who wants to look after our dog?" they asked.

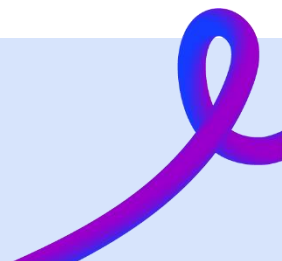


4 "Where is your jacket from?" he asked.



5 "How much is your house worth?" she asked.





Changing pronouns with reported questions

Look at the highlighted pronouns. **Answer** the question in the blue box.



Where can **I** buy a first edition?



She asked where **she** could buy a first edition from.

For reported speech, change the pronouns to who is now speaking.

Who does **she** refer to in the example above?

Complete the sentences

Fill in the gaps using the correct pronoun.

- 1 "Are you married?" they asked me.
They asked if _____ was married.
- 2 "Will she visit me in hospital?" he asked.
He asked if _____ would visit him in hospital.
- 3 "Can you help me?" he asked.
_____ asked if I could help him.
- 4 "Where are they travelling to?" he asked.
He asked where _____ were travelling to.
- 5 "When can we return the favour?" she asked.
She asked when _____ could return the favour.

Wait, what did he ask you?

1. **Imagine** you're telling a friend about a party you went to last night.
2. **Report** these questions from the party. **Role-play** the situation with a partner.
3. **Watch out!** Some of the questions were for other people, not for you!

1



Peter talking to you:
Are you married?

There was this guy called Peter. He seemed pretty direct, because he asked me...

2



Mary talking to your friend Jeanette:
Do you have any children?

Mary, all she ever talks about is having kids! She asked Jeanette...

3



Tom and Gary talking to you:
Are you still a doctor?

Remember my old neighbours, Tom and Gary? They asked me...

End of the lesson

Idiom

to put someone on the spot

Meaning: to make somebody feel uncomfortable or embarrassed by asking them a difficult question



Additional practice



Pronunciation

Practise saying the verbs below.

1

asked

/ɑːskt/

2

watched

/wɒtʃt/

3

blocked

/blɒkt/

4

looked

/lʊkt/

5

pushed

/pʊʃt/

Matching

Match the sentences to form a complete question or reported question.

1 She asked me whether...

2 Can you...

3 She asked...

4 How much...

5 When will...

a how much the book cost.

b does the book cost?

c order the book?

d we could order the book.

e the book arrive?



That's not my job!

**What's the craziest
favour your boss has
ever asked you for?**



***She asked if I could
make her a latte?!***



Transform the sentences

Change the sentences from direct questions to reported questions.

1 "When are you going to Rome?" she asked.



2 "What kind of food do you like?" he asked.



3 "Why are you working in Hamburg?" she asked.



4 "How much money do you make?" they asked.



5 "When will they arrive?" he asked.





Discuss



**What's the worst question
someone has ever asked
you at a party?**

Tell the class about it!



Answer key

- P. 4:** 1. Sylvia and Anna work at a bookshop called Bountiful Books.
2. Mrs. Thompkins is a regular customer.
- P. 5:** 3. No, as they don't sell 1st editions.
4. Yes, Anna is happy with the call.
- P. 7:** 1. Mrs Thompkins
- P. 9:** **Direct question:** 2, 4, 5
Reported question: 1, 3
- P. 10:** 1. to ask;
2. whether
- P.11** 1. was
2. had
3. did
4. could
5. would

Answer key

- P. 12:**
1. work; worked
 2. can; could
 3. are; was
 4. eat; ate
 5. will; would
- P. 13:**
1. Mrs. Thompkins: 'Where can I buy a first edition?'; Anna: 'What did Mrs. Thompkins want?'
 2. They use a *wh*- question instead of *if* or *whether*
- P. 14:**
1. She asked how I was.
 2. He asked which plant was my favourite.
 3. They asked who wanted to look after their dog.
 4. He asked where my jacket was from.
 5. She asked how much my house was worth.
- P. 15:** She refers to Mrs Thompkins.
- P. 16** 1. I; 2. She; 3. He; 4. They; 5. They
- P. 22:** 1. d) 2. c) 3. a) 4. b) 5. e)



Summary

Direct to reported speech – *yes/no* questions

- Use of *if* and *whether*
- Tense shift: 'Do you have any tea?' she asked (present) → She asked me *if/whether* I had any tea. (past)

Direct to reported speech – *wh-* questions

- 'How much money do you have?' she asked → She asked how much money I had.
- Note tense shift and change in position of verb
- Note helping verb is dropped when verb changes to past simple

Pronoun shifts

- During change to reported speech pronouns are often changed
- "Are you moving house?" she asked. → She asked if I was moving house. (you → I)



Vocabulary

first edition

to stock (a product)

to have (a product) in stock

