

## Asking Questions 1

## Rudyard Kipling, 1902

## A

In questions the subject is usually after the first verb:

*subject + verb*

verb + subject

Tom	will	→	will	Tom?
you	have	→	have	you?
the house	was	→	was	the house?

- ☐ **Will Tom** be here tomorrow?
- ☐ **Have you** been working hard?
- ☐ When **was the house** built?

The subject is after the *first* verb:

- ☐ **Is Katherine** working today? (*not Is working Katherine*)

## B

In *present simple* questions, we use **do/does**:

you live → **do** you **live**?  
the film starts → **does** the film **start**?

- ☐ Do you **live** near here?
- ☐ What time **does** the film **start**?

In *past simple* questions, we use **did**:

you sold → **did** you **sell**?  
the train stopped → **did** the train **stop**?

- ☐ Did you **sell** your car?
- ☐ Why **did** the train **stop**?

But do not use **do/does/did** if **who/what** etc. is the subject of the sentence. Compare:

**who** *object*

Emma phoned somebody.

object

Who **did** Emma **phone**?

**who** *subject*

Somebody phoned Emma.

*subject*

## Who **phoned** Emma?

In these examples, **who/what** etc. is the *subject*:

- ☐ **Who wants** something to eat? (*not Who does want*)
- ☐ **What happened** to you last night? (*not What did happen*)
- ☐ **How many people came** to the party? (*not did come*)
- ☐ **Which bus goes** to the centre? (*not does go*)

## C

In questions beginning **who/what/which/where**, prepositions (**in, for** etc.) usually go at the end:

- ☐ **Where** are you **from**?
- ☐ **Who** do you want to speak **to**?
- ☐ **What** was the weather **like**?
- ☐ **Which** job has Tina applied **for**?

You can use *preposition* + **whom** in formal style:

- ☐ **To whom** do you wish to speak?

## D

**isn't it ...? / didn't you ...?** etc. (negative questions)

We use negative questions especially to show surprise:

- Didn't you** hear the doorbell? I rang it three times.

or when we expect the listener to agree with us:

- **'Haven't we** met before?' 'Yes, I think we have.'

Note the meaning of **yes** and **no** in answers to negative questions:

- ☐ ‘Don’t you want to go?’ { ‘Yes.’ (= Yes, I want to go)  
‘No.’ (= No, I don’t want to go)

We often use negative questions with **Why ...?**:

- ☐ **Why don't we** eat out tonight? (*not* Why we don't eat)
- ☐ **Why wasn't Emma** at work yesterday? (*not* Why Emma wasn't)

## Asking questions 2- do you know where ... ? **Reported speech** -he asked me where...

**A** Do you **know where ... ? / I don't know why ... / Could you tell me what ... ?** etc.

We say: Where **has Tom** gone?

but **Do you know** where **Tom has** gone? (*not has Tom gone*)

When the question (**Where has Tom gone?**) is part of a longer sentence (**Do you know ... ? / I don't know ... / Can you tell me ... ?** etc.), the word order changes. We say:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> What time <b>is it</b> ?        | but <b>Do you know</b> what time <b>it is</b> ?           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Who <b>are those people</b> ?   | <b>I don't know</b> who <b>those people are</b> .         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Where <b>can I</b> find Louise? | <b>Can you tell me</b> where <b>I can</b> find Louise?    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How much <b>will it</b> cost?   | <b>Do you have any idea</b> how much <b>it will</b> cost? |

Be careful with **do/does/did** questions. We say:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> What time <b>does the film start</b> ? | but <b>Do you know</b> what time <b>the film starts</b> ? |
|   | ( <i>not does the film start</i> )                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> What <b>do you mean</b> ?              | <b>Please explain</b> what <b>you mean</b> .              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Why <b>did she leave</b> early?        | <b>I wonder</b> why <b>she left</b> early.                |

Use **if** or **whether** where there is no other question word (**what, why** etc.):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Did anybody see you? | but I don't know <b>if</b> anybody saw me. |
|   | or ... <b>whether</b> anybody saw me.      |

**B** He asked me where ...

The same changes in word order happen in questions in reported speech. Compare:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>direct</i> | The police officer said to us 'Where <b>are you going</b> ?' |
| <i>reported</i>                        | The police officer asked us where <b>we were going</b> .     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <i>direct</i> | Clare asked 'What time <b>do the shops close</b> ?'          |
| <i>reported</i>                        | Clare wanted to know what time <b>the shops closed</b> .     |

In reported speech the verb usually changes to the past (**were, closed** etc.). Study these examples. You had a job interview and the interviewer asked you these questions:

Are you willing to travel?

Why did you apply for the job?

What do you do in your spare time?

Can you speak any other languages?

How long have you been working in your present job?

Do you have a driving licence?

Later you tell a friend what the interviewer asked you. You use *reported speech*:

- ☐ She asked if (*or whether*) **I was** willing to travel.
- ☐ She wanted to know what **I did** in my spare time.
- ☐ She asked how long **I had been working** in my present job.
- ☐ She asked why **I had applied** for the job. or ... why **I applied** ...
- ☐ She wanted to know if (*or whether*) **I could** speak any other languages.
- ☐ She asked if (*or whether*) **I had** a driving licence.