**Questions: *wh-*questions**

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**SOURCE: http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/questions-and-negative-sentences/questions-wh-questions**

*Wh-*questions begin with *what, when, where, who, whom, which*, *whose*, *why* and *how*. We use them to ask for information. The answer cannot be *yes* or *no*:

A:

***When*** *do you finish college?*

B:

*Next year*.

A:

***Who*** *is your favourite actor?*

B:

*George Clooney for sure!*

**Forming *wh-*questions**

**With an auxiliary verb**

We usually form *wh-*questions with *wh-* + an auxiliary verb (*be, do* or *have*) + subject + main verb or with *wh-* + a modal verb + subject + main verb:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Be: When* ***are*** *you leaving?* | *Who****’s******been*** *paying the bills?* |
| *Do: Where* ***do*** *they live?* | *Why* ***did****n’t you call me?* |
| *Have: What* ***has*** *she done now?* | *What* ***have*** *they decided?* |
| *Modal: Who* ***would*** *she stay with?* | *Where* ***should*** *I park?* |

**Without an auxiliary verb**

Warning:

When *what, who, which* or *whose* is the subject or part of the subject, we do not use the auxiliary. We use the word order subject + verb:

***What*** *fell off the wall?* ***Which*** *horse won?*

***Who*** *bought this?* ***Whose*** *phone rang?*

Compare

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Who owns this bag?* | *Who* is the subject of the sentence and *this bag* is the object. We use no auxiliary verb. |
| *Who do you love most?* | *Who* is the object of the sentence and *you* is the subject. We use the auxiliary verb *do*. |

**Responding to *wh-*questions**

*Wh-*questions ask for information and we do not expect a *yes*-*no* answer to a *wh*-question. We expect an answer which gives information:

A:

*Where’s the coffee machine?* (We expect an answer about the location of the coffee machine.)

B:

*It’s in the room next to the reception*.

A:

*How old is your dog?* (We expect an answer about the age of the dog.)

B:

*She’s about five. I’m not very sure*.

**Adding emphasis to *wh-*questions**

We can add emphasis to *wh-*questions in speaking by stressing the auxiliary verb *do*. We usually do this when we have not already received the information that we expected from an earlier question, or to show strong interest.

When the *wh*-word is the object of the sentence, the *do* auxiliary is stressed to make it more emphatic:

A: *How was your weekend in Edinburgh?*

B: *I didn’t go to Edinburgh*.

A: *Really. Where* ***did*** *you go?*

B: *We decided to go to Glasgow instead*.

When the *wh-*word is the subject of the sentence, we can add the auxiliary *do* to make it emphatic. We stress *do*:

A: *Ronald Price lives in that house, doesn’t he?*

B: *No. He moved out*.

A: *So who* ***does*** *live there?* (non-emphatic question: *So who lives there?*)

B: *Actually, his son is living there now*.

See also:

* [Intonation and *wh-*questions](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/questions-wh-questions#questions-wh-questions__6)

 **Negative *wh-*questions**

When we ask negative *wh-*questions, we use the auxiliary verb *do* when there is no other auxiliary or modal verb, even when the *wh-*word is the subject of the clause:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Affirmative with no auxiliary** | **Negative with auxiliary** ***do*** |
| ***Who*** *wants an ice cream?* | ***Who doesn’t*** *want an ice cream?* |
| ***Which*** *door opened?* | ***Which door didn’t*** *open?* |

**Adding a *wh-*word at the end of a statement to make a question**

Spoken English:

In speaking, we can sometimes turn *wh-*questions into statement questions:

*What’s today’s date? or Today’s date is what?*

We do this especially when we are checking information that we have already been given or when we want to quickly check a particular detail. These are less formal than full *wh*-questions:

A: *So we’re all going to be there at eight?*

B: *Right, I’m travelling with Larry*.

A: ***You’re travelling with who?*** (more formal: *Who are you travelling with?*)

B: *With Larry. We’re actually going on our bikes*.

A: *Is your sister here too or just your mother?*

B: *Just my mother*.

A: ***And she’s here until when?*** (more formal: *And when is she here until?* or even more formal: *Until when is she here?*)

See also:

* [Questions: statement questions (*you’re over 18?*)](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/questions-statement-questions-you-re-over-18)
* [Questions: echo and checking questions](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/questions-echo-and-checking-questions)

**Intonation and *wh-*questions**

The intonation of *wh-*questions is normally falling. The falling intonation is on the most important syllable:

*Where are the keys to the back* ***do↘or****?*

*Why are the lights* ***re↘d****?*

When we ask *wh-*questions to check or clarify information that has already been given, we may use rising or fall-rising intonation:

***Wh↗at*** *did you say the time was?* (I know you’ve told me before but I’ve forgotten.)

***Wh↘o*** *p↗aid for the meal?*

See also:

* [Adding emphasis to *wh-*questions](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/questions-wh-questions#questions-wh-questions__3)

**Prepositions and particles with *wh-*questions**

We can use *wh-*words and phrases after prepositions in more formal questions:

***Where*** *will the money come* ***from****?*

***From******where*** *will the money come?* (formal)

Spoken English:

In informal styles, especially in speaking, the preposition may be separated and placed at the end of the question clause:

***What*** *will I talk to her* ***about****?*

***Who*** *should we send the invitation* ***to****?* (informal)

***Whom*** *should we send the invitation* ***to****?* (formal)

***To whom*** *should we send the invitation?* (more formal)

***For what reason*** *did she leave him?* (formal: preposition + *wh*-phrase)

When we make questions shorter, we usually put the preposition and its complement together:

A: *We’re all meeting up tonight*.

B: ***At what*** *time?*

Not: ~~What time at?~~

See also:

* [Questions: short forms](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/questions-short-forms)

When we ask questions using verbs consisting of a main verb + particle, e.g. *get up, set out* (phrasal verbs), we do not separate the verb from the particle or preposition:

*When did you* ***wake up*** *this morning?*

Not: ~~Up when did you wake?~~

See also:

* [Verbs: multi-word verbs](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/verbs-multi-word-verbs)