

English Grammar – Questions

Asking questions 1

The basic rule for asking questions in English is straightforward: Invert the order of the subject and the first auxiliary verb.

- It is snowing. = Is it snowing?
- He can speak German. = Can he speak German?
- They have lived here a long time. = Have they lived here a long time?
- She will arrive at ten o'clock. = Will she arrive at ten o'clock?
- He was driving fast. = Was he driving fast?
- You have been smoking. = Have you been smoking?

If there is no auxiliary, use part of the verb 'to do'.

- You speak fluent French. = Do you speak fluent French?
- She lives in Brussels. = Does she live in Brussels?
- They lived in Manchester. = Did they live in Manchester?
- He had an accident. = Did he have an accident?

Most questions with question words are made in the same way:

- How often does she use it?
- Why don't you come?
- Where do you work?
- How many did you buy?
- What time did you go?
- Which one do you like?
- Whose car were you driving?

Note *who* and *what* can be the subject. Compare:

- Who is coming to lunch? (who is the subject of the verb)
- Who do you want to invite to lunch? (you is the subject of the verb)
- What happened? (*what* is the subject of the verb)
- What did you do? (*you* is the subject of the verb)

Note the position of the prepositions in these questions:

- Who did you speak **to**?
- What are you looking **at**?
- Where does he come **from**?

1) Yes/No questions

Subject and verb change their position in statement and question.

statement	You are from Germany.
question	Are you from Germany?

We always use the short answer, not only "Yes" or "No". This sounds rude.

NOTE:

If the answer is "Yes", we always use the long form.

Example: Yes, I am.

If the answer is "No", we either use the long or the contracted form (short form).

Example: No, I am not - No, I'm not.

Are	you	from Germany?	Yes,	I	am.
			No,	I	am not. 'm not.
Is	he	your friend?	Yes,	he	is.
Are	Peter and John	from England?	Yes,	they	are.

2) Questions with question words

Question word	Verb	Rest	Answer
Where	are	you from?	I'm from Stuttgart.
What	is	your name?	My name is Peter.
How	are	Pat and Sue?	They're fine.

3) Yes/No Questions and short answers with the verb have

Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Rest	Yes/No	Subject	Auxiliary (+ n't)
Have	you	got	a cat?	Yes,	I	have.
Have	you	got	a new car?	No,	we	haven't.
Has	your brother	got	a bike?	Yes,	he	has.

4) Questions with question words and the verb have

Question word	Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Rest	Answer
Where	have	you	got	your ruler?	I've got it in my pencil case.
Where	do	you	have	your ruler?	I have it in my pencil case.

5) Questions without question words in the Simple Present

Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Rest	Yes/No	Subject	Auxiliary (+ n't)
Do	you	read	books?	Yes,	I	do.
				No,	I	don't.
Does	Peter	play	football?	Yes,	he	does.

6) Questions with question words in the Simple Present

Question word	Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Rest	Answer
What	do	you	play	on your computer?	I play games on my computer.
When	does	your mother	go	to work?	She goes to work at 6 o'clock.
Where	do	you	meet	your friends?	I meet them at the bus stop.

7) Questions without question words in the Simple Past

Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Rest	Yes/No	Subject	Auxiliary (+ n't)
Did	Max	play	football?	Yes,	he	did.
				No,	he	didn't.
Did	you	watch	the film yesterday?	Yes,	I	did.
				No,	I	didn't.

BUT:

to be	Subject	xxx	Rest	Yes/No	Subject	Auxiliary (+ n't)
Were	you		in Leipzig last week?	Yes,	I	was.
				No,	I	wasn't.

8) Questions with question words in the Simple Past

Question word	Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Rest	Answer
What	did	you	do	yesterday evening?	I did my homework.
When	did	she	meet	her boyfriend?	She met him yesterday.
Where	did	they	go	after the match?	They went to a café.

BUT:

Question word	to be	Subject	xxxxx	Rest	Answer
Where	were	you		yesterday?	I was at the cinema.

9) Subject question

Question word	Verb	Rest	Subject	Verb	Object - Place - Time
Who	runs	to the shop?	Peter	runs	to the shop.

10) Object question

Question word	Auxiliary	Subject	Verb	Rest	Answer
Who	do	you	like?		I like my mum .
Who	did	Mandy	phone	last Monday?	Mandy phoned her uncle .

NOTE!

Subject question			Object question			
Who	phoned	John?	Who	did	John	phone?