

LESSON 8

Asking Questions

- I. The three types of questions.
- II. How to frame interrogative sentences.
- III. Some common phrases in spoken English beginning with who, how and what.

(i) Three types of questions

The three major classes, into which questions can be divided on the basis of answers they expect, are:

1. Questions expecting answers in a yes/no. These are Yes – No questions.

Those beginning with 'be' forms of verbs (is, am, are, was, were)

Those beginning with do, does, did

Those beginning with, has, have or had

2. Questions expecting as a reply any one of the options given in the questions as answers. These are called as Alternative questions.

3. Questions expecting a reply supplying some information. They begin with 'wh' words: Who, whose, whom, what, which, when, why, where, how. These are WH-questions.

Formation of Interrogative Sentences

When there is a simple statement the arrangement of words is;

Subject + Verb + rest of sentence

In an interrogative sentence the subject– verb sequence is reversed. It becomes;

Verb + Subject + rest of sentence

Example:

	(s)	(v)	
Statement	He	is	happy.
	(v)	(s)	
Question form	Is	he	happy?

Questions can be asked in three ways depending upon the kind of answer expected.

(1) Yes - No questions - Those that expect answers in a 'Yes' or 'No'

Some examples are:

"Are you taller than a giraffe?"

"Are you hungry?"

"Are you angry with her?"

"Can you see the bus?"

These are yes / no questions.

Study the following questions and answers:-

Questions

Are they at home?

Am I expected there?

Is it raining?

Answers

Yes, they are. (affirmative)

No, they aren't. (negative)

Yes, you are. (affirmative)

No, you aren't. (negative)

Yes, it is. (affirmative)

No, it isn't. (negative)

Note:

Each of the above questions begins with a 'be' form of verb i.e. is, am, are, was, were.

For each, the answer can be 'yes' or 'no'

BUT, remember if in a statement there is no 'be' form of verb, the auxiliaries do, does, or did are used as the question words.

Example:

Statement

1. He likes driving.

2. They needed a new bed.

3. You want to shift to a new house.

4. The girls have their lunch at 2 p.m.

Interrogative sentence

Does he like driving?

Did they need a new bed?

Do you want to shift to a new house?

Do the girls have lunch at 2 p.m.?

Exercise 1

Here are a number of declarative sentences (statements). Change these into interrogative sentences using the following as the question word: is, am, are, was, were, or do, does, did. Follow the example.

Example:

He works hard.

Does he work hard?

Statement	Question word
1. You went for a drive on Sunday	_____
2. The children are happy now.	_____
3. She is a tall girl.	_____
4. She waits for you.	_____
5. He reached the airport.	_____
6. You like me.	_____
7. The door is open.	_____
8. The girls make noise every day	_____
9. I am as tall as Reena.	_____
10. They were not satisfied.	_____

(2) Alternative questions

Questions expecting as reply one of the options given in the questions as answers.

So far, you have learned how to frame questions expecting a “yes” or “no” answer. Now we will learn how to frame questions where two or more options are given and the person answering has to choose one of them. For example look at the question, “Do you want to go for a walk or stay at home?” The answerer has to choose between the two choices given in the question.

Study the following questions:

- (a) Where are you going, to school or to the market?
- (b) What do you want to eat, apples or bananas?
- (c) Which jacket do you like, the green one or the blue one?
- (d) Shall I get you tea or coffee?

What do you notice?

When choices are given in a question, the word “or” is used between the choices.

(Frame a number of such questions and practice)

(3) Wh - Questions - Questions seeking information or details

Those which expect a reply supplying some information as in the questions,

“What is your name?” or,

“How old are you?”

These are ‘Wh’ questions .

When we don’t want an answer in ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, but need some more information, we begin the question with a ‘wh’ word as the question word:

Examples:

Questions	Information given
1. Where is your mother?	She is in the kitchen.
2. What is she doing there?	She is cooking.
3. Who is with her?	The cook is with her.
4. Whose house is this?	It’s my father’s house.
5. How many girls should I call?	You can call five girls.

Note how:

Each question begins with the ‘wh’ word .

The auxiliary follows it, but not necessarily immediately.

The answers supply some information.

Let us take the ‘wh’ words one by one and examine the type of information they seek.

WHO (Seeking information about a person)

Who is the man waiting in the lobby?

Who drives this bus?

Who is knocking at the door?

Who is the author of this book?

Who cooked our dinner today?

Who is this child’s mother?

Who is responsible for this mess?

WHAT (Asking for information specifying something)

What material has been used for this cup?

What is inside this room?

What does your father do for a living?

What would you like to do after work this evening?

What kind of man is Suresh?

What time will the class begin?

What should I wear to the party?

What is the best time to phone Mr. Narang?

WHERE (Seeking information about place, that is, where something/someone is located)

Where are your parents?
Where do you come from?
Where do you live?
Where would you rather eat – at home or in a restaurant?
Where have you kept my spectacles?
Where is the accounts office?
Where will you go after the meeting?
Where should I hang my clothes to dry?

WHEN (Seeking information about time)

When do you think you can take an extra class?
When is your birthday?
When do the migratory birds arrive in Bharatpur?
When did the new manager take over?
When will the wheat crop be harvested?
When does the next bus leave?
When should I get in touch with you?
When will the interview letters be posted?

WHOSE (Seeking information about the possessor of certain things)

Whose bag has been left behind?
Whose house shall we meet at?
Whose shoes are these in the corner?
This answer sheet has no name – *whose* is it?
Whose letter should I read first?
Whose car will we be driving to Manali?
Whose advice should we take – Seema's or Malini's?
Whose drawing seems to be the best?

WHICH (Seeking to know someone's choice)

Which of these two paintings is yours?
Which book should I select?
Which way is the nearest market?
Which sandwich would you prefer?
Which food would you like to have – Indian or Chinese?
Which room is Mr. Gupta's?
Which of these two cars belongs to you?
Which is your favourite hot drink?

WHY (Seeking the reason for an action)

Why do you want to change your job?

Why do you insist on wearing shorts in the winter?

Why does the moon look like a crescent sometimes?

Why is Sameera looking upset?

Why will Tara want to miss the party? She was longing to go.

Why should I take a bus when I can easily walk the distance?

Why are you shouting at me? I didn't drop the plate!

Why would anyone want to fall ill?

Why choose a hot place for a holiday in the summer?

WHOM (Seeking information or identifying which person)

By *whom* has this letter been written?

To *whom* did you give the present ? or *Who* did you give this present to?

From *whom* am I going to get the call ?

To *whom* is the letter addressed?

To *whom* are you going to give this application? Or *Who* are you going to give this application to?

Note: In spoken English replace the personal objective 'whom' by 'who' but never when preceded by a preposition.

HOW (Seeking information about the mode or manner)

How did you carry this heavy cupboard here?

How do you make dosas?

How much is this wallet for?

How many slices of bread did you eat?

How is Sangeeta feeling now?

How far is the railway station from your house?

How big is your garden?

How do you do? or *How* are you?

How on earth did you manage to learn such a long poem?

How will Shefali get home at night?

How deep is this well?

How high is the building?

How soon will it get dark?

How did people entertain themselves before the television was invented?

(Learners can frame questions of their own with these words)

Exercise2

The following pictures show Namita's daily routine. Frame questions to get the given answers using the following words: when, which, what, how, how long, when. You can use one word more than once.



1. She wakes up at six o'clock in the morning.
2. She likes to wear the blue dress.
3. She has toast and milk for breakfast.
4. She walks to school.
5. She has her classes in Room No.5.
6. She is studying in class VII.
7. She comes back at 4 p.m.
8. She watches television for half an hour.
9. She has her dinner at 8 o'clock.
10. She goes to sleep at 10 o'clock

(ii) Use of phrases beginning with 'how', 'who' and 'what' in Spoken English

How

1. *How come* (the phrase is used to ask the reason for something)
How come you are in the office till so late?
How come all the money was spent?

2. *How could you* (Used to show that you strongly disapprove of somebody's behaviour, or, are very surprised by it. When speaking, the emphasis is on the word "could".)

How could you be so rude to your mother?

How could they leave without my permission?

3. *How much* (The phrase is used to ask the cost of something)

How much are these bangles for?

How much did your car cost?

4. *How's that* (The phrase is used to ask reason for something.)

Rekha-Now I have started reaching home twenty minutes earlier than I usually used to.

Meena - How's that?

What

1. *What about* (Used to make a suggestion and also to introduce somebody or something into a conversation)

What about him? Is he ready to accompany us?

What about you, Rakesh? Are you also coming with us?

What about the dog? Who will take care of him when we're away?

2. *What for* (Used to ask the purpose or reason for some action. Sometimes, "what for" can be used in place of "why".)

Reeta- I have bought twelve plastic buckets.

Meena - What for?

3. *Whatever / whatsoever* (Used when we want to express the idea of any or every)

They could not get any help, whatsoever. (Here it is used to express the idea that no help of any kind was available)

They gave him whatever they could. (Here "whatever" conveys that all possible help was given)

Who

1. *Who are you / who am I?* (Used to ask what right or authority somebody has to ask something.)

Who are you to stop me from going to a movie?

He is my boss. Who am I to tell him how to behave?

Exercise 3

Complete the following sentences using the given phrases

(How much, How come, How about, How could you, What for, Whatever)

- i. I like these plates. Can you tell me _____ these are for?
- ii. You are always on time. _____ you are so late today?
- iii. You don't like the pink dress. _____ the blue one?
- iv. _____ you speak so rudely to Radha? She is much older than you.
- v. _____ do you need so many bed sheets? Two will be enough for this short trip.
- vi. _____ you may say, she is always helpful.

Declarative Questions

These type of questions are often used in spoken English. These expect answer in Yes / No. Their form is that of a statement except that in these the speaker uses final rising intonation.

- i. You have the keys?
- ii. They've called the ambassador?
- iii. You know what the risks are?
- iv. He couldn't finish the race?

Answers to Exercise 1

- i) Did he go for a drive?
- ii) Are the children happy now?
- iii) Is she a tall girl?
- iv) Does she wait for you?
- v) Did he reach the airport?
- vi) Do you like me?
- vii) Is the door open?
- viii) Do the girls make noise every day?
- ix) Are you as tall as Reena?
- x) Were they satisfied?

Answers to Exercise 2

- (i) When does Namita get up in the morning?
- (ii) Which dress does she like to wear?
- (iii) What does she have for breakfast?
- (iv) How does she go to school?
- (v) In which room does she have her classes?
- (vi) In which class is she studying?
- (vii) When does she come back?
- (viii) What does she do at home after coming back from school?
- (ix) At what time does she have her dinner?
- (x) When does she go to sleep?

Answers to Exercise 3

- (i) How much
- (ii) How come
- (iii) How about
- (iv) How could
- (v) What for
- (vi) Whatever