

Direct and Indirect Questions

What are direct questions?

Direct questions are ordinary questions we make by using inversion.

- *What time is it?*
- *Where are you going?*
- *How long have you been working here?*
- *Do you speak any foreign languages?*

What are indirect questions?

If we want to be more polite, we ask questions indirectly, by using an introductory phrase before the question.

- *Do you know what time it is?*
- *I'd like to know where you are going.*
- *I was wondering how long you've been working here.*
- *Could you tell me if you speak any foreign languages?*

You may notice that the word order in indirect questions is the same as in an affirmative sentence.

- *How much does it cost?*
- *Can you tell me how much it costs?*

Here are some introductory phrases you can use with indirect questions:

- *Can/could you tell me...*
- *Do you (happen to) know...*
- *I'd like to know...*
- *I wonder/I am wondering...*
- *Is there any chance/possibility...?*
- *Do you think...*

For example:

- *"Where is the post office?"*
- *"Can you tell me where the post office is?"*
- *"What time does the train arrive?"*
- *"Do you happen to know what time the train arrives?"*
- *"How old is your son?"*
- *"I'd like to know how old your son is."*
- *"How many people attended the meeting?"*
- *"I am wondering how many people attended the meeting"*
- *"Do you have this jacket in a smaller size?"*

- *"Is there any chance you have this jacket in a smaller size?"*
- *"Is it going to be cold tomorrow?"*
- *"Do you think it is going to be cold tomorrow?"*
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Indirect questions in yes/no questions

To form an indirect question for a yes/no question, we use "if" after an introductory phrase. Note that the word order in an indirect question is like in a statement.

Verb tense	Direct question	Indirect question
Present Simple	Does this restaurant serve breakfast?	Do you know if this restaurant serves breakfast?
Present Continuous	Are you working tomorrow?	I wonder if you are working tomorrow.
Present Perfect	Have you read any interesting books lately?	Can you tell me if you have read any interesting books lately?
Present Perfect Continuous	Have you been working here long?	Can you tell me how long you've been working here?
Past Simple	Did you watch the football match yesterday?	Could you tell me if you watched the football match yesterday?
Past Continuous	Were you doing homework at 7 o'clock yesterday?	I wonder if you were doing homework at seven o'clock yesterday.
Past Perfect	Had you learned English before you came to England?	Can you tell me if you had learned English before you came to England?
Past Perfect Continuous	Had you been waiting long before the flight?	I wonder if you had been waiting long before the flight.
Future Simple	Will you visit us later?	Can you tell me if you will visit us later?
Future Continuous	Will you be working tomorrow afternoon?	Can you tell me if you will be working tomorrow afternoon?
Future Perfect	Will it have stopped raining by 5 o'clock?	I wonder if it will have stopped raining by 5 o'clock.
Be going to	Are we going to see the sights at the weekend?	I'd like to know if we are going to see the sights at the weekend.

Indirect questions in WH-questions

Verb tense	Direct question	Indirect question
Present Simple	When do you usually have breakfast?	I'd like to know when you usually have breakfast.

Present Continuous	What are you studying?	I wonder what you are studying.
Present Perfect	Where have you put my phone?	Will you tell me where you have put my phone?
Present Perfect Continuous	How long have they been living there?	I wonder how long they have been living there.
Past Simple	When did you stop smoking?	Can you tell me when you stopped smoking?
Past Continuous	Where were you going when we met?	I'd like to know where you were going when we met.
Past Perfect	What time had you left home?	I wonder what time you left home.
Past Perfect Continuous	Where had you been working before?	Could you tell me where you were working before?
Future Simple	Who will you go with?	I wonder who you will go with.
Future Continuous	What will you be doing this time next week?	Do you know what you will be doing this time next week?
Future Perfect	When will you have finished the report?	I wonder when you will have finished the report.
Be going to	What are you going to wear at the party?	Can you tell me what you are going to wear at the party?