

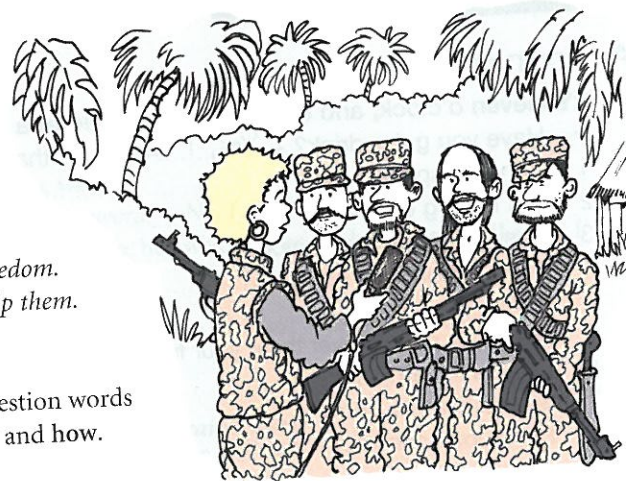
36 Wh-questions

1 Introduction

Reporter Kitty Beamish is interviewing some guerrilla fighters.

Kitty:
Why are you fighting?
What can you do for the people?
When will the war be over?

Guerrillas:
 For our freedom.
 We can help them.
 Very soon.



A wh-question begins with a question word. Question words are who, what, which, whose, where, when, why and how. We use a wh-question to ask for information.

2 Form

Most wh-questions begin with a question word + an auxiliary verb + the subject. (For another form of wh-question, see Unit 37.) An auxiliary verb is a form of be or have or a modal verb, e.g. can.

QUESTION WORD	AUXILIARY	SUBJECT	VERB
What	is	Kitty	doing?
Where	have	you	put the map?
When	can	we	travel safely?

The main verb be also comes before the subject in questions.

Where **is** Kitty? How **are** you? What **was** that noise?

If there is more than one auxiliary verb, only the first one comes before the subject.

The guerrillas **have been** hiding. → Where **have** the guerrillas been hiding?

I **should have** said something. → What **should** I have said?

In the Present Simple and Past Simple we use a form of do.

QUESTION WORD	AUXILIARY	SUBJECT	VERB
Where	do	people	meet?
How	does	the radio	work?
What	did	the guerrillas	say?

An ordinary verb such as meet, work or say cannot come before the subject.

NOT *Where meet people?* and NOT *How works the radio?*

The verb after the subject does not end in -s or -ed.

NOT *How does the radio works?* and NOT *What did the guerrillas said?*

3 Question phrases

Look at these question phrases with what and how.

What time is your friend arriving? ~ Half past eight.

What kind of/What sort of club is it? ~ A nightclub.

How often do you go out? ~ About once a week, usually.

How long will the meeting last? ~ An hour or so, I expect.

How much money did you spend? ~ About a hundred pounds.

What colour is your toothbrush? ~ Yellow.

How old is your sister? ~ She's twenty.

How far is the beach? ~ Only five minutes' walk.

How many televisions have you got? ~ Three.

Practice

A Wh-questions (1–2)

What would you say in these situations?

▶ You are talking to a man at a party. Ask him where he works.

Where do you work?

1 You want to know what the date is today. Ask your friend.

2 You've forgotten when the course finishes. Ask your friend.

3 Your friend is having a party. You'd like to know who he has invited. Ask him.

4 Your favourite band are going to give a concert. Ask how you can get tickets.

5 You are in town with a friend, and you are wondering where the two of you are going to have lunch. What do you ask?

B Question words and phrases (1–3)

Quiz champion Claude Jennings is answering questions. Put in these words and phrases: *how far, how long, how often, how many, what, what colour, what kind, when, where, who*

Quiz-master:

▶ What colour is the Greek flag?

1 is Melbourne?

2 centimetres are there in a kilometre?

3 did the Second World War end?

4 did Romeo love?

5 is Sirius?

6 is it from Los Angeles to San Francisco?

7 are the Olympic Games held?

8 of food is Cheddar?

9 is a game of rugby?

Claude:

Blue and white.

It's in Australia.

A hundred thousand.

In 1945.

Juliet.

It's a star.

About 400 miles.

Every four years.

It's cheese.

Eighty minutes.

C Wh-questions (1–3)

Guy is interviewing a guest on his chat show. It's the actress Melissa Livingstone, who is in the TV soap opera 'Round the Corner'. Put in Guy's questions.

▶ Guy: How often do you record 'Round the Corner'?

Melissa: Oh, we record it every day. It's a full-time job, you know.

1 Guy: And it?

Melissa: In Birmingham, at the BBC studios.

2 Guy:

Melissa: How many? Well, let me see, I think we've done a thousand programmes.

3 Guy:

Melissa: I'm not going to tell you. How much money I earn is my business.

4 Guy: OK, I'm sorry.

Melissa: Oh, a long time ago. I started acting when I was twelve.

5 Guy:

Melissa: My plans for the future? I just want to go on with 'Round the Corner'.

37 Subject/object questions

1 Who and what



Who is interviewing Kitty?

Who and what can be the subject of a question. The word order is the same as in a statement.

SUBJECT

- Who rang you?**
(Someone rang you.)
- Who is helping you?**
(Someone is helping you.)
- What will happen next?**
(Something will happen next.)



Who is Kitty interviewing?

Who and what can also be the object. An auxiliary (e.g. did, will) comes before the subject.

OBJECT

- Who did you ring?**
(You rang someone.)
- Who are you helping?**
(You are helping someone.)
- What will they do next?**
(They will do something next.)

Who and what can also be the object of a preposition, e.g. to, with. (For prepositions in questions, see Unit 38.) Compare these sentences.

SUBJECT

- Who was talking to you?**
(Someone was talking to you.)
- What wine goes with fish?**
(Some wine goes with fish.)

OBJECT

- Who were you talking to?**
(You were talking to someone.)
- What does this colour go with?**
(This colour goes with something.)

2 Which, whose, how many and how much

These words can also be either the subject or the object.

SUBJECT

- Which program will work best?**
(One of the programs will work best.)
- Whose dog is barking over there?**
(Someone's dog is barking over there.)
- How many people came past?**
(Some people came past.)
- How much oil got into the river?**
(Some oil got into the river.)

OBJECT

- Which program will you use?**
(You will use one of the programs.)
- Whose dog is Melanie walking?**
(Melanie is walking someone's dog.)
- How many people did you see?**
(You saw some people.)
- How much oil did you buy?**
(You bought some oil.)

Practice

A Who and what as subject and object (1)

Read about the situations and answer each question in a single phrase.

- ▶ The morning after his party, Tom was cleaning up. David came along and took away some empty bottles for him. Nick had just woken up after spending the night on Tom's sofa. He watched them for a while.
 - a) Who helped Tom? David
 - b) Who did Nick help? No one
- 1 Nick wants to marry Rita. She's been out with him a few times, but really she's in love with Tom. Unfortunately he isn't in love with her.
 - a) Who is Nick in love with?
 - b) Who is in love with Tom?
- 2 Mark met Sarah at the airport. The plane was two hours late. On the way out they passed Mike standing at a bus stop, but they didn't notice him.
 - a) Who met Sarah?
 - b) What was Mike waiting for?
- 3 There was an accident at the crossroads. A lorry crashed into a van that was waiting at the lights. The van slid forward and crashed into a car. The van driver had to go to hospital.
 - a) What hit the van?
 - b) What did the van hit?

B Who and what as subject and object (1)

People aren't giving you enough information. Ask questions with *who* or *what*.

- ▶ Something has happened. ~ Oh? What has happened?
- ▶ I've invited someone to tea. ~ Well? Who have you invited?
- 1 Somebody is having a party. ~ Oh, really?
- 2 I was reading something. ~ Oh?
- 3 I've learnt something. ~ Go on, tell me.
- 4 We should do something. ~ Yes, I know, but
- 5 Someone is looking for you. ~ Oh?
- 6 I'm looking for someone. ~ Maybe I can help.
- 7 Rachel is planning something. ~ Is she?
- 8 Somebody has moved in next door. ~ Oh, really?
- 9 Something is worrying me. ~ Well, tell me.
- 10 I want to meet someone. ~ What do you mean?

C Which, whose, how many and how much (2)

Harriet is visiting her grandmother, Mrs Evans. It's Mrs Evans's birthday.

She can't hear very well, and she sometimes gets confused. Complete her questions.

Harriet:

- ▶ So ten people have sent cards.
- ▶ I met David's friend yesterday.
- 1 You can keep those photos.
- 2 Those flowers look lovely.
- 3 Fifty pounds went missing.
- 4 I passed Mark's house earlier.
- 5 The doctor has four children.
- 6 Doctors earn lots of money.
- 7 Mike's uncle has died.
- 8 Trevor's wife is coming later.

Mrs Evans:

- Pardon? How many people have sent cards?
- What? Whose friend did you meet?
- Photos? Which
- Do they? Which
- Missing? How much
- Pardon? Whose
- Really? How many
- I don't know. How much
- What's that? Whose
- Oh? Whose

38 Prepositions in wh-questions

1 Introduction



Daniel and Rachel each ask Vicky a question. In each question, the word **what** is the object of a preposition (for, about).

- What are you looking for?**
(You are looking for something.)
- What are you worrying about?**
(You are worrying about something.)

The preposition normally comes in the same place as in a statement: looking for, worrying about.
NOT *For what are you looking?*
NOT *About what are you worrying?*
But in more formal English, the preposition can come before the question word.

- In which** warehouse were the goods stored?
OR **Which** warehouse were the goods stored **in**?
- In formal English we use a preposition + whom (not **who**).
- From whom** did you obtain the information?
OR **Who** did you obtain the information **from**?

Here are some more examples of prepositions in wh-questions.

- Who** are we waiting **for**? ~ Rachel.
- What's** Nick laughing **at**? ~ Oh, one of Tom's jokes.
- Where** are you **from**?/ **Where** do you come **from**? ~ Sydney.
- What kind of** holiday are you interested **in**? ~ A package holiday.
- Who** did you go out **with** last night? ~ Just a friend.

2 What ... for and what ... like

We can use a question with **what ... for** to ask about purpose.

- What did you buy this computer magazine for?** ~ To read about business software.
- What are these bricks for?** ~ We're going to build a wall.
- What are they digging the road up for?** ~ They're repairing a gas pipe.

What ... for means the same as **why**.

- Why** are they digging up the road? ~ They're repairing a gas pipe.

We can use **what ... like** to ask if something is good or bad, interesting or boring, etc.

- What was the party like?** ~ Oh, we had a great time.
- What's the place like** where you live? ~ It's pretty quiet.

Note also **look like**.

- What does your friend look like?** ~ She's very tall and blond.

But we use **how** to ask about someone's well-being.

- How** are you? ~ I'm OK, thanks. And you?
- How** are you getting on in your new job? ~ I'm really enjoying it.

Compare these two questions.

- How's** Melanie? ~ Oh, she's fine, thanks. (She is happy/in good health.)
- What's** Melanie **like**? ~ She's very nice. (She is a nice person.)

Practice

A Prepositions in wh-questions (1)

Ask these people questions with **what**.

Use these verbs and prepositions: **look at**, **look for**, **point at**, **talk about**, **wait for**



▶ **What are you looking for?**

-
-
-
-

B Prepositions in wh-questions (1)

Put in the question. Use **what** and put the preposition in brackets at the end.

- ▶ Melanie: Tom is smiling. He's pleased. (about)
David: Yes, he is. **What is he pleased about?**
- ▶ Laura: I'm busy today. I'm getting ready. (for)
Trevor: **What are you getting ready for?**
- 1 Jessica: I've done something awful. I'm ashamed. (of)
Andrew:
- 2 Trevor: Haven't you heard of Kitty Beamish? She's famous. (for)
Ilona: No, I haven't.
- 3 Sarah: Mark is annoyed. He's going to complain. (about)
Claire:
- 4 Matthew: Emma's in a hurry. She's going to be late. (for)
Daniel:
- 5 Vicky: I don't feel very relaxed. I feel nervous. (about)
Rachel:

C What ... for and what ... like (2)

Trevor has just come home from work. Complete the conversation. Put in **for**, **how**, **like** or **what**.

- Trevor: Hello, my love. ▶ **How** are you?
- Laura: Hello. I'm all right, but I'm in a bit of a rush getting ready for the barbecue.
- Trevor: Er, I forgot to tell you that I invited two more people.
- Laura: (1) are you telling me now (2) ? I've bought all the food. I just hope there's enough. Anyway, who are these people? (3) are they (4) ?
- Trevor: They're friends of Harriet's. They're very nice people. And after all, (5) are parties (6) ? To meet new people.
- Laura: It isn't a party, it's a barbecue. (7) 's the weather going to be (8) ?
- Trevor: The forecast said it's going to be perfect. Warm and dry.
- Laura: Good. And (9) was your day?
- Trevor: Oh, not too bad. Busy as usual.

39 Who, what or which?

1 What or which?

We can use what or which before a noun.

WHAT

What sport do you play?

What books do you read?

We use what when there is a wide choice of possible answers. We ask *What sport?* because there are lots of different sports.



What sport?
(Tennis or golf or football or hockey or ...?)

WHICH

Which way do we go here?

Which finger did you break?

We use which when there is a limited number of possible answers. We ask *Which way?* because there are only two or three ways to go.



Which way?
(Right or left?)

After which we sometimes say the possible answers.

Which café did you go to, Snoopy's, the Coffee Pot or the Tea Gardens?

Which phone shall I use, this one or the one in the office?

Sometimes what and which are both possible.

What day/Which day is your evening class? What train/Which train will you catch?

What platform/Which platform does the train go from? What part/Which part of Italy are you from?

2 Patterns with who, what and which

We can use who, what and which without a noun.

Who sent the fax? What do you think of our plan? Which is quicker, the bus or the train?

We can use what and which before a noun, but not who.

Which secretary sent the fax? NOT ~~*Who secretary sent the fax?*~~

We can use which with one or ones, or with of.

You can have a photo. Which one would you like?

You can have some of the photos. Which ones would you like?

Which of these photos would you like?

But we cannot use who or what before of.

Which of the secretaries? but NOT ~~*Who of the secretaries?*~~

Who always means a person.

Who did you see? (a person)

What usually means a thing. It can mean a person only when it comes before a noun.

What did you see? (a thing) *What doctor/What film did you see?* (a person or a thing)

Which can mean a person or a thing.

Which doctor/film did you see? (a person or a thing)

▷ 102 One and ones

Practice

A What or which? (1)

The questions you are asking have a number of possible answers.

If the list of answers is incomplete, ask a question with *what*. If the list is complete, use *which*.

▶ (Do you play the piano, or the violin, or the guitar, or ...?)

What musical instrument do you play?

▶ (Did you go to the Little Theatre or the Theatre Royal?)

Which theatre did you go to?

1 (Did you take the morning flight or the afternoon flight?)

2 (Did you stay at the Grand Hotel or the Bristol?)

3 (Do you like classical music, or jazz, or rock music, or ...?)

4 (Did you buy 'Time' magazine, or 'Newsweek', or a computer magazine, or ...?)

5 (Do you work for EuroChemicals, or ICM, or SenCo, or ...?)

6 (Are you learning English, or Spanish, or Arabic, or Japanese, or ...?)

B What or which? (1)

Rita is moving into a new flat. Trevor has come to see the flat and help her move in.

Complete his questions. Put in *what* or *which*.

▶ Trevor: *What* number is this building?

Rita: Forty-two.

1 Trevor: I didn't realize there were only three floors. floor is your flat on?

Rita: The first floor.

2 Trevor: It's a very nice flat. room will be your living-room?

Rita: This one here, I thought.

3 Trevor: colour are you going to paint it?

Rita: Oh, I don't know yet.

4 Trevor: time is your furniture arriving?

Rita: Three o'clock, they said.

5 Trevor: I'll need some petrol. way is the nearest petrol station?

Rita: Turn left at the end of the street.

C Who, what or which? (2)

Detectives Wilson and Taylor are looking into the murder of Lord Weybridge at his country house.

Put in *who*, *what* or *which*.

Wilson: ▶ *Which* of the guests in this house is the murderer, do you think, Taylor?

Taylor: I don't know yet. (1) had the opportunity? (2) of the guests had the chance to do it?

Wilson: (3) happened after dinner last night? That's what we have to find out.

Taylor: There must be a motive for the murder. (4) motive could the murderer have?

Wilson: Love or money – they're the usual motives. (5) of them is it, I wonder?

Taylor: (6) did Lord Weybridge leave his money to? That's the question, Wilson.