

# Direct and indirect questions

Lesson code: PBNQ-C62D-EPBZ

INTERMEDIATE

## 1 Presentation

When we ask for information, we often use **direct questions**: *Where is it?*

If we want to be more polite or formal, we can use **indirect questions**: *Can you tell me where it is?*

Direct questions	Indirect questions
<b>Direct questions</b> are normal questions:	<b>Indirect questions</b> begin with <b>Could you tell me ...</b> , <b>Can you tell me ...</b> , <b>I'd like to know ...</b> , <b>Do you know ...</b> , etc.:
What time <b>is it</b> ?	<b>Can you tell me</b> what time <b>it is</b> ?
How long <b>does the journey take</b> ?	<b>Do you know</b> how long <b>the journey takes</b> ?
Why <b>are you</b> crying?	<b>I'd like to know</b> why <b>you are</b> crying.
How long <b>have you</b> been living here?	<b>Could you tell me</b> how long <b>you've</b> been living here?
<b>Is he</b> at home?	<b>Do you know</b> if <b>he is</b> at home?
<b>Did she</b> reply to your email?	<b>I wonder</b> if <b>she replied</b> to your email.

### Rules for forming direct and indirect questions

**Direct questions** can be **simple questions** (*Are you at home?*), **subject questions** (*Who won the match?*) or **object questions** (*What did they win?*).

With **simple questions** and **object questions** we use special word order for questions:

If there is a 'helping verb' (*auxiliary verb*), for example **will**, **was**, **have** and **can**, we put the subject after the *auxiliary verb*:

**Can you** help me?      Where **will Allie** be tonight?      How many languages **can you** speak?

In **present simple** and **past simple** questions, we use **do/does/did**:

Where **do they** live?      **Did you** call me?

**Indirect questions** have the same word order as statements (*subject before verb*):

Do you know how long **the journey takes**?

We do not use **do/does/did** in the question: Do you know how long ~~does the journey take~~?

If there is no question word (**who**, **where**, **why**, **how**, etc.) in the **direct question**, we can use **if** or **whether** in the **indirect question**:

I wonder **if** she replied to your email.

I wonder **whether** she replied to your email.



**2 Practice 1**

**Rewrite the questions below as indirect questions.**

1. Where is the nearest hotel?  
Could you tell me where the nearest hotel is?
2. How do you say this in English?  
I'd like to know .....
3. Do you have this shirt in a smaller size?  
Can you tell me .....
4. How long did the meeting take?  
I wonder .....
5. How did you fix the television?  
Can you explain .....
6. Where are you going to stay this weekend?  
Please tell me .....
7. How long has he been waiting?  
I don't know .....
8. Why did you come to our country?  
I'm curious .....

**3 Practice 2**

**Complete the job interview below.**



**Interviewer:** Let's talk about your previous job. Could you describe \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup>  
(what were your responsibilities?)

**Michelle:** Well, my duties included answering the phone, dealing with customers and organising meetings for the director.

**Interviewer:** And can you tell us \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> (why did you quit?)

**Michelle:** Well, after 5 years in the same company, I felt that I was ready for a different challenge.

**Interviewer:** Could you tell us \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup>  
(why would you like to work for our company?)

**Michelle:** Yes. Your company is well-known all over the world.

**Interviewer:** Hmm. I'd like to know \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup>. (what are your weaknesses?)

**Michelle:** Well, I am a perfectionist, and sometimes this can be a problem. But I'm working on it.

**Interviewer:** OK. Please let us know \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> (can you start next week?)

**Now listen to check your answers. Scan the code on the right with your mobile device or go to <http://www.linguahouse.com/4e03e978-f1dd-b1c4-053e-4ee7ccda7363/Direct-indirect-questions->**



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