

## LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

### DIRECT AND INDIRECT QUESTIONS (GRAMMAR)

When asking for information in English one can use direct and indirect questions. There are differences in sentence structure and levels of politeness and formality.

In English, a basic question can be formed using either an auxiliary verb or a question word.

#### For example:

Does he like swimming? (Auxiliary verb)

Where is the library? (Question word)

These are both examples of direct questions.

However, in English there are situations where it can be considered impolite to ask a direct question so we might ask an indirect question.

Indirect questions are often used when talking to someone we don't know well, in formal / professional situations, and / or where the topic might be 'sensitive'.

Indirect questions are a little more formal and polite. We use them when talking to a person we don't know very well, or in professional situations.

#### Examples for direct and indirect questions:

Direct question	Indirect question
How old are you?	Would you mind telling me how old you are?
Where's the bank?	Could you tell me where the bank is?
Why are they late?	I wonder why they are late?
What time is it?	Do you have any idea what time it is?
Help me!	Is there any chance you could help me?
Who's that?	Do you happen to know who that is?

#### Grammar differences in direct and indirect questions

There are three important grammatical changes between direct and indirect sentences.

1. When we start using an indirect question form (such as those on the right hand side of the table above), the word order is the same as a positive statement, not a question.

<b>Direct question</b>	<b>Indirect question</b>
What is his name?	Do you know what his name is? (NOT Do you know what is his name?)
What are you doing?	Can you tell me what you are doing? (NOT Can you tell me what are you doing?)

2. If the direct question uses the auxiliary verb 'do' (i.e. does, did, do), it is left out of the indirect question.

<b>Direct question</b>	<b>Indirect question</b>
Where <b>does</b> she live?	Do you know where she lives? (NOT Do you know where she does live?)
Who did she work for?	Can you tell me who she worked for? (NOT Can you tell me who she did work for?)

3. If the direct question can be answered with 'Yes' or 'No', the indirect question needs 'if' or 'whether'.

<b>Direct question</b>	<b>Indirect question</b>
Is she coming back soon?	Do you know if she is coming back soon?
Have you seen this man before?	Can you tell me whether you have seen this man before?

**EXERCISE:**

1. Where does she play tennis?

2. Does he live in Paris?
3. Is she hungry?
4. What is this?
5. Do they work in Canada?
6. When do John and Luke meet?
7. Is he a lawyer?
8. When is the party?
9. Do they often go out?
10. What does he do at the weekend?
11. Where is Market Street?
12. What time does the bank open?
13. Does Tom like Italian food?
14. How has he managed to get in shape so quickly?
15. Are your parents joining us for dinner?

**ANSWERS:**

1. Can you tell me where she plays tennis?
2. Can you tell me if he lives in Paris?
3. Can you tell me if she is hungry?
4. Can you tell me what this is?
5. Can you tell me if they work in Canada?
6. Can you tell me when John and Luke meet?
7. Can you tell me if he is a lawyer?
8. Can you tell me when the party is?
9. Can you tell me if they often go out?
10. Can you tell me what he does at the weekend?
11. Could you tell me where Market Street is?
12. Do you know what time the bank opens?

13. Do you know if Tom likes Italian food?
14. Do you have any idea how he's managed to get in shape so quickly?
15. Could you tell me if your parents are joining us for dinner?

