GRAMMAR REFERENCE

Direct and indirect questions

1 In a direct question, the normal word order is verb–subject. In an indirect question, the word order is subject–verb, and the question begins with a phrase like *Do you know* …:
*When **is Mr Patel** leaving?*
→ ***Do you know** when **Mr Patel is** leaving?*

2 An indirect question does not use the auxiliary *do*:
*Where **does Mr Elmore** work?*
→ *Could you tell me **where Mr Elmore** works?*

3 For *Wh-/How* questions, we retain the question word:
How much does it cost?
→ *Can you tell me **how much** it costs?*

4 When *who* or *what* is the subject of the question, there is no difference in word order:
***Who left** this message?*
→ *Do you have any idea **who left** this message?*

5 For *Yes/No* questions, we use *if* or *whether (or not)*:
Is it going to rain tomorrow?
→ *Do you know **whether** it's going to rain tomorrow?*

Negative questions

1 Negative questions usually begin with the contracted negative form of an auxiliary or modal verb.
***Aren't** you based in Milan?*
***Didn't** they sell hardware as well as software?*
***Can't** you work a bit later tonight?*

2 We often use negative questions to:
  • complain: ***Haven't** you finished yet?*
  • make a suggestion: ***Why don't** you join us?*
  • check information: ***Isn't** this yours?*
  • make a request: ***Can't** we join you at the meeting?*

Question tags

Question tags follow a statement and use the subject and an auxiliary or modal verb in question form.

1 If the statement is positive, the question tag is negative:
*It's hot, **isn't it**?*

2 If the statement is negative, the question tag is positive:
*You haven't seen my keys, **have you**?*

3 Statements with auxiliary or modal verbs repeat the auxiliary or modal in the question tag:
*She **won't** go to China, **will** she?*
*You **can** swim, **can't** you?*

4 Statements with no auxiliary or modal verb use *do* in the question tag:
***You work** for Siemens, **don't you**?*

5 Question tags retain the same tense as the statement:
*He **left** early yesterday, **didn't** he?*

6 If the subject is *someone, somebody, everyone, everybody, anyone, anybody*, use *they* in the tag:
***Anyone** can use the meeting room, can't **they**?*
If the subject is *nobody* or *no one*, the tag is positive:
***Nobody** knew about that, **did they**?*

Language at work

1 Rewrite the direct questions as indirect questions using the words given.
  1 Will he take the job?
     Do you know _____?
  2 When did Amanda send them the catalogue?
     Could you find out _____?
  3 Is this the train for Munich?
     Do you have any idea
     _____?
  4 Where does the bus for Place de la Concorde go from?
     I'd like to know _____.
  5 Have you had anything from the minibar?
     Could you tell me _____?
  6 Who left this package here?
     I was wondering _____.
  7 What time will you be arriving?
     I'd be grateful if you could tell me
     _____.
  8 What day is best for you?
     Please let us know _____.

2 Change 1–5 into negative questions.
  1 Are you in charge of training?
     _____
  2 Have you completed that report yet?
     _____
  3 Should they be here by now?
     _____
  4 Can I have my own team working on this?
     _____
  5 Did you want to say something?
     _____

3 Add a suitable question tag to 1–8.
  1 You're from London, _____?
  2 You couldn't give me a lift to the station, _____?
  3 The bank shuts at 5.00, _____?
  4 You didn't see Anna, _____?
  5 You haven't seen Joe, _____?
  6 You won't tell anyone, _____?
  7 Nobody's called, _____?
  8 That wasn't easy, _____?