



**Remember to watch the video first!** Then read the conversation between Sophie and Neema, a student she met in Tanzania. Sophie's helping Neema prepare for a test on question forms.



**Grammar  
Snacks**

We use the question words *who* (for people), *what/which* (for things), *when* (for time), *where* (for places), *why* (for reasons) and *how* (for more details).



**Neema**

What do I need to know about question words?

I know you know the basics, but questions are quite tricky. Let's just go over the main rules.

We usually form questions by putting an *auxiliary verb*, or a *modal verb*, before the *subject*.

**Does** it suit me?  
**Has** Mum called?  
**Can** you get the tea?  
**Shall** I pass you to Oliver?

When the verb 'to be' is the *main verb*, we *don't* use *auxiliary verbs*.

**Is** Oliver there?  
**Was** it good?

We can add *question words* to get more or different information.

**Where** did you go swimming? > In the swimming pool in town.  
**Why** did you go there? > Because it's a nice, big pool.  
**Who** did you go swimming with? > With Amy.  
**What** time did you meet Amy? > At 10 o'clock.  
**Which** pool did you go in? > The serious one, without the slides!  
**How** did you get there? > On the bus.



**Sophie**



I see that questions sometimes finish with prepositions.

Yes, that's very common.

*Who* were you out **with**?  
*What* have you got that bag **for**?  
*What's* all that **about**?  
*Where* are you calling **from**?





OK, that all seems straightforward.

Yes, but do you know about *subject* and *object* questions?



Sorry?

If *who*, *what* or *which* is the *subject* of the question, it comes *before the verb* and we *don't* use *do* as an auxiliary.

**Who** went out for curry? (*subject – who*)

**What** happened? (*subject – what*)

**Which** looks better, this or that one? (*subject – which*)

*Object* questions follow the structure we looked at before.

**Who** did **you** go out for curry with? (*subject – you; object – who*)

**Which** restaurant does **Oliver** like most? (*subject – Oliver; object – which*)

**What** did **they** do after the restaurant? (*subject – they; object – what*)



I think I understand ...

Here's a little test for you, then. A cat killed a mouse and a dog killed the cat.

- 1 What killed the mouse?
- 2 What did the cat kill?
- 3 What killed the cat?
- 4 What did the dog kill?



OK, 1 the cat, 2 the mouse, 3 the dog, 4 the cat. Right?

Exactly! You've got it.



Any more tricky things about question words?



Well in *reported speech* or *indirect questions*, question words come in the middle of sentences. In these types of sentence, the word order *does not* change. We *don't* put the verb *to be* before the subject or use an auxiliary to form a question, as in a normal question:

*I asked her **what** she was doing at the weekend.*

*Do you know **where** the post office is?*

*Can you tell me **how much** it costs?*

**What** are you doing at the weekend?

**Where** is the post office?

**How much** does it cost?



Hmm, why do you use indirect questions if they are more complicated?

Well, they are more polite, especially if you are talking to a stranger.



OK, I'll remember to say: '*Do you know where the post office is?*'

Good. Can you make that even more polite?



How about: '*Excuse me, could you tell me where the post office is, please?*'

Fine! That'll do. Do you really need a post office?!



Watch the video on our website!

