XI

Direct and Indirect Questions

Direct and **indirect** questions are integral parts of English grammar, serving different functions in communication, with distinct rules and conventions.

Direct Questions

Direct questions are straightforward inquiries posed directly to the listener or reader. They are used to elicit specific information and are common in everyday conversation.

Structure: Typically, direct questions follow a clear **subject-verb-object** order and often start with a question word **(who, what, where, when, why, how)** or an auxiliary verb **(do, does, did, is, are**, etc.) in the case of yes/no questions.

Form:
Question Word + Auxiliary Verb + Subject + Main Verb (+ Object/Complement)
Auxiliary Verb + Subject + Main Verb (+ Object/Complement) for yes/no questions

Example:
- "Where do you live?"
- "Does she like the movie?"

Indirect Questions

Indirect questions serve to make inquiries in a more polite or formal manner. They are often used to soften the request for information or to show deference in social and professional situations.

Structure: Indirect questions embed a direct question within a statement or another question, leading to a more complex sentence structure. They usually do not use subject-verb inversion and often start with phrases like "**Could you tell me**...," "**I wonder**...," or "**Do you know**..."

Form:
Introductory Phrase + Question Word + Subject + Verb (without subject-verb inversion)
The tense in the indirect question usually follows the rules of reported speech, adjusting according to the context and time frame.

Example:
- "Could you tell me where you live?"
- "Do you know if she likes the movie?"

Punctuation and Intonation

- **Direct questions** end with a question mark **(?)** and typically have a rising intonation, especially in **yes/no** questions, signaling an inquiry.
- **Indirect questions** may end with a full stop **(.)** if part of a larger statement or with a question mark if the entire utterance is a question, usually carrying a falling or level intonation.
- **Direct questions** are more common in informal contexts where the speaker needs straightforward information quickly and directly.
- **Indirect questions** are preferred in formal writing and speaking, or in situations where politeness and tact are required. They reflect a more respectful approach to seeking information.

Direct and Indirect questions Exercise 1:

Choose the correct answer.

1. Which of these is a direct question?
a) Can you tell me where John is?
b) Where is John?
c) I was wondering where John is.

2. Choose the correct indirect form of "Where does she live?"
a) Where she lives?
b) Do you know where she lives?
c) Tell me where does she live?

3. Which is NOT a way to introduce an indirect question?
a) Do you know...
b) Can you say...
c) Why...

4. Direct or indirect: "Could you explain why the system failed?"
a) Direct
b) Indirect
c) Neither

5. The direct version of "He asked if I had seen the movie" is:
a) Did you see the movie?
b) Have you seen the movie?
c) Had you seen the movie?

6. How do you usually end an indirect question?
a) With a question mark
b) With a full stop
c) With an exclamation point

7. "Where can we meet?" in indirect form is:
a) Where we can meet?
b) Can we meet where?
c) Can you tell me where we can meet?

8. What is the indirect form of the question "Where are you going?"
a) could tell me where are you going?
b) Would you please tell me where you are going?
c) Where you are going?

9. The indirect version of " what is the time?"
a) what the time is?
b) Can you tell me what is the time?
c) Would you mind telling me what the time is?

10. The direct version of "could you tell me where he is?"
a) Where is he?
b) Tell me where he is
c) Where he is?

Direct and Indirect questions Exercise 2:

Complete the indirect versions of the dirtect questions above.

1. What is your favorite color?
Can you tell me .....?

2. Where did you grow up?
I wonder .....

3. How often do you exercise?
Could you let me know .....?

4. When is your birthday?
Do you mind telling me .....?

5. Can you play any musical instruments?
I wonder if you .....

6. Who is your role model?
I'd like to know .....

7. Which book are you reading currently?
Could you tell me .....?

8. How long does it take to get to the office?
Can you say.....?

9. Are you planning to go on holiday this year?
Do you know if .....?

10. Why did you choose this profession?
Can you explain .....?



Direct and indirect questions: answer key

Grammar practice · B2 Upper-intermediate

Where two or more answers are given, any of them is correct.

Exercise 1

1. b) Where is John?
2. b) Do you know where she lives?
3. c) Why...
4. b) Indirect
5. a) Did you see the movie? or b) Have you seen the movie?
6. b) With a full stop
7. c) Can you tell me where we can meet?
8. b) Would you please tell me where you are going?
9. c) Would you mind telling me what the time is?
10. a) Where is he?

Exercise 2

1. what your favourite colour is / what your favorite color is
2. where you grew up
3. how often you exercise
4. when your birthday is
5. can play a musical instrument / can play any musical instruments / can play musical instruments
6. who your role model is
7. which book you are reading currently / which book you are currently reading / which book you are reading
8. how long it takes to get to the office
9. you are planning to go on holiday this year
10. why you chose this profession

Corrections to the printed pages

Explanation: direct questions put an auxiliary verb before the subject (Where do you live?).

Exercise 1, item 5: a) Did you see the movie? is also correct.