

## Getting help

9 Compare a) and b) each time, then study the notes in the box below.

- When *is the meeting*?
  - Can you tell me *when the meeting is*?
- What time *does the meeting start*?
  - Can you tell me what time *the meeting starts*?
- Which room *will it be in*?
  - Can you tell me which room *it will be in*?
- Will the meeting start on time*?
  - Can you tell me *if/whether the meeting will start on time*?

## Indirect questions

- Each example (a) is a direct question.
- Each example (b) is an indirect question. Typical phrases to begin an indirect question are:  
*Can you tell me ...?*  
*Do you know ...?*  
*Can I just check ...?*  
*Do you think you could let me know ...?*  
*I'm trying to find out ...*  
*I was (just) wondering ...*
- Notice how the word order changes in the indirect questions. The subject comes before the main verb, just like in a normal statement (*The meeting is at 10.30; The meeting starts at 10:30; It will be in room 24; The meeting will start on time.*)
- Notice also how 2b has no auxiliary verb *does*, again just like in a statement.
- In example 3a and 3b notice the position of the preposition *in*. The preposition comes at the end of a question (both direct and indirect). Be careful: in many other languages you would say *In which room ...?*, but this word order is not common in modern English.
- Example 4 is a Yes/No question, whereas the previous three were open 'Wh-' questions. Notice how we use *if* or *whether* with an indirect Yes/No question.

Now rewrite each direct question as an indirect question, beginning as shown.

- How can I get to the station from here?  
Can you tell me \_\_\_\_\_?
- What time does the train leave?  
Do you know \_\_\_\_\_?
- Which platform will it leave from?  
I'm trying to find out \_\_\_\_\_.
- Do I change in Cologne?  
Can I just check \_\_\_\_\_?
- Can I get something to eat on the train?  
I was wondering \_\_\_\_\_.

10 Change each Yes/No question into a more open 'Wh-' question.

- Are you thinking about your presentation?  
*What are you thinking about?* \_\_\_\_\_
- Did you borrow this from Susan?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Is this dress made of linen?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Will you share your new office with Miguel?  
\_\_\_\_\_

11 Look at the patterns with 'mind', then study the notes in the box below.

- Do you mind if I **open** the window?
- Would** you mind if I **opened** the window?
- Do/Would** you mind **opening** the window?

Questions with *mind*

Examples a) and b) are asking for permission: a) is a regular first conditional and b) is a regular second conditional (both have the *if* clause at the end). Example b) is more formal and polite. Example c) is a request – we want the other person to do something.

Now make questions using the words in brackets.

- (mind/call you back/later) \_\_\_\_\_?
- (mind/called you back/later) \_\_\_\_\_?
- (Would/calling me back/later) \_\_\_\_\_?

12 Study the notes in the box.

## Replying to requests

To reply 'yes', simply repeating the auxiliary is not very friendly.

*Can you give me a hand?*

Yes, I can X      Yes, of course ✓      Sure ✓

To reply 'no', give an apology and/or a reason.

*Can you give me a hand?*

*I'm sorry, I've got no idea how it works. ✓*

Be careful! Questions with *mind* mean 'is it a problem for you?' So 'yes' means 'yes, it's a problem!'

*Would you mind giving me a hand?*

Yes, I would X      No, not at all ✓

Now put a tick (✓) by appropriate responses. Put a cross (X) by inappropriate responses.

- Can you show me how to use this software?
  - Sure. No problem.
  - Yes, I can.
  - To be honest, I've never used it myself.
- Would you mind showing me how to use this software?
  - Yes, I would.
  - No, not at all.
  - Actually, I'm a bit busy right now. Perhaps later?