

52 Reported questions, commands and requests

'Today I want to talk about piracy and music. What is piracy? Piracy is the act of stealing an artist's work without any intention of paying for it.'



COURTNEY LOVE addressed the conference today. She chose to talk to us about piracy and music – first she asked what piracy was, and then defined it for us as the act of stealing an artist's work without any intention of paying for it.

1 Reported questions

Reported question word order is the same as in statements:

if/whether/wh-word	subject	verb (+ object/complement)
He asked if	we	were feeling hungry .
She asked what	piracy	was .

! The word order above is fixed:
~~X She asked what was piracy.~~

We do not use auxiliary *do*, *does* or *did* in reported questions:

~~X They asked the driver where did the bus stop.~~ ✓ They asked the driver **where the bus stopped**.

We introduce indirect closed (*yes/no*) questions with *if* or *whether*:

Lester wondered **if/whether** there was anything better in life.

We can present alternatives with *whether/if ... or not*. We can put *or not* immediately after *whether* but NOT immediately after *if*:

Deborah asked **whether or not** there was a lift in the apartment block.

Deborah asked **whether/if** there was a lift in the apartment block **or not**.

In indirect open questions we use a question word:

The nurse asked **when** exactly the pain had started.

! We report negative questions which express surprise or criticism with a 'functional' verb (► Unit 50.4):

'Wasn't the play fantastic?' → ~~X She asked if the play hadn't been fantastic.~~
✓ She **exclaimed that the play had been fantastic**.

'Isn't the rule stupid?' → ~~X He asked if the rule wasn't stupid.~~
✓ He **complained that the rule was stupid**.

2 Reported commands, requests, etc.

In indirect commands we use a reporting verb, e.g. *tell*, *order*, *command*, *forbid* + *to* + infinitive:

When the vet had finished, he **told** them to let the animal sleep.

He **forbade** us to pass on any of the information to the authorities.

We use *ask* for reporting requests, and *beg* or *urge* with urgent requests:

'Please come back later.' → His secretary **asked** me to come back later.

We can use *ask for* + passive infinitive if *ask* has no object:

The cinema manager **asked for** the culprit to be brought to his office.

! Note that to report a negative command or request, we put *not to* before the verb (except with *forbid*, which already has a negative meaning):

Several members of the royal family **urged** Edward VIII **not to abdicate**.

I asked you **not to bring** a present. (= I said 'Please don't bring a present.')

This is different from: I **didn't ask** you to bring a present. (no request made)

We can report statements that fulfil other functions in the same way:

'Come on. I'll give you a lift.' → Geoff **offered to give** me a lift.

For other verbs with *to* + infinitive ► Unit 50.5