

Indirect questions

Certainly. You have to get back to where we went ashore.

Excuse me, *can you tell me* where the nearest beach is?

Thank you. And *do you know* if there is an aquarium nearby?



Grammar in Context

Theme: *The world of sports*

Words by Theme



Read the conversation and answer the questions.

Leo is an Olympic diver. He is seeking advice from Dr Brown, a sports psychologist¹.

Dr Brown: Thank you for coming to see me. ① *I'd like to know* how you feel. ② *Could you tell me* how you've been after the game?

Leo: I've been feeling bad. When I knew I was disqualified² from the final, it felt like the end of the world. ③ *I wondered* if my professional career³ was over. I couldn't sleep or eat. I didn't want to see anyone, especially my coach⁴.

Dr Brown: I heard that you are very close to your coach.

Leo: Yes. He treats me like his son. That's why I feel so ashamed. I'm sure if we meet, he's going to ask, '④ *Can you tell me* why you made that mistake?' ⑤ *Do you know* why I pushed you so hard?'

Dr Brown: You scored low because of a misstep⁵. You're blaming yourself too much. ⑥ *May I know* whether you want to have a chat with your coach?

Leo: I'm sure he's greatly displeased with me.

Dr Brown: In fact, he's now working on a new training programme⁶ tailored for you. He never gives up on you.

Leo: Really? Then I must thank him for his support.



1. Complete the table by writing the numbers ① – ⑥.

Indirect questions	
(i) <i>wh</i> -questions	
(ii) yes / no questions	

2. Which two question words are used in the indirect questions for *wh*-questions?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

3. Which two conjunctions are used in the indirect questions for yes / no questions?

(i) _____ (ii) _____

PART 1 Introductory phrases for indirect questions

Indirect questions are a more polite way to ask for information.

Introductory phrases	Examples
Can / Could you tell me ...? Can / Could you explain ...?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you tell me which the best-selling product is? Could you explain how I use this tool?
May I ask ...? May I know ...?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May I ask what your address is? May I know how much this is?
Do you know ...? Do you think ...?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know how I can get to the bus stop? Do you think this plan will work?
I wonder / was wondering ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I wonder who the next chairperson is. I was wondering if I could borrow your umbrella.
I'd like to know ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I'd like to know whether the dinner is ready.

I was wondering + if / whether ... is used to ask for help politely.

PART 2 Wh-questions

When we change *wh*-questions into indirect questions, we keep the *wh*-word and take away the *do / does / did*. We put the subject before the verb, following the order in a statement.

Where is the cashier?
→ *Can you tell me* *where* the cashier is?

Which colour does Nick prefer?
→ *I wonder* *which colour* Nick prefers.

How can I get likes on social media?
→ *I'd like to know* *how* I can get likes on social media.



PART 3 Yes / No questions

We form indirect questions for yes / no questions in a similar way to *wh*-questions. However, we use *if* or *whether* instead of a *wh*-word after the introductory phrase.

Do you speak Cantonese?
→ *I'd like to know* *if / whether* you speak Cantonese.

Error Diagnosis

Do not use a question mark with a statement.

I wonder whether she slept well last night?

I wonder whether she slept well last night.

The word order of an indirect question is the same as that of a statement.

Could you tell me when is the application deadline?

Could you tell me when the application deadline is?

For indirect questions with *Do you think ...*, we do not use *if* or *whether*.

Do you think if the bus has gone?

Do you think the bus has gone?



Exercise 1

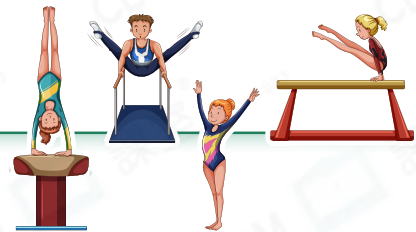
Change the indirect questions into direct questions.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. Could you tell me who the manager is? | Who is the manager? |
| 2. I was also wondering if Eugene was upset. | _____ |
| 3. Do you think the printer is working? | _____ |
| 4. May I ask when the meeting will start? | _____ |
| 5. Can you explain why you are late? | _____ |
| 6. I wonder whether Jay has a driving licence. | _____ |
| 7. We would like to know where we can buy the equipment. | _____ |
| 8. Do you know whether the latest version of this game is available now? | _____ |



Exercise 2

Louisa is preparing some interview questions for a gymnast. Change the direct questions into indirect questions.



Questions for the gymnast

- Why are you passionate about gymnastics?
Can you tell us why you are passionate about gymnastics? _____
- Did you start training as a gymnast when you were small?
I'd like to know _____
- Who was your coach when you started?
May I ask _____
- Do you find gymnastics very challenging?
Do you think _____
- How long do you train daily?
May I know _____
- Have you ever received training overseas?
I'd like to know _____
- What does your coach say to you before competitions?
Could you tell us _____
- How did you overcome stage fright in the Olympics?
I wonder _____



Grammar in Pre-DSE Text Type

Theme: The world of sports

Frank is a successful weightlifter. He is writing an autobiography. Complete the excerpt with the help of the given words.

Words by
Theme



I was a customer service officer at a fitness gym¹ for professional weightlifters². During the first year, I observed how the weightlifters trained themselves. I always wondered

(1) how they could lift very heavy weights. (they / very heavy weights / lift)

I wanted to know (2) the same as I did. (the same / do / I)

One day, I had a chance to talk to one of the professional weightlifters, Dave.

‘Dave, may I know (3) what you do for a living.’

(I / become / weightlifter) I asked. He told me to train step by step and to warm up before I start lifting weights. I replied, ‘May I ask (4)

what types of warm-up exercises you do. (do / types of warm-up exercises³ / I)

Could you also explain (5) the benefits of weightlifting.’

(benefits / from them / get / I) From that day on, I followed Dave’s instructions to build my strength⁴.

I watched plenty of weightlifting videos as well because I would like to know (6)

how to correct my postures. (my postures⁵ / correct) When I was lifting, I always

looked in the mirror and wondered (7)

if I was gaining muscles. (not gain / muscles⁶ / I)

After six months of training, Dave said to me, ‘Do you realise you are doing much better than many beginners? Can you tell me (8)

how you have improved in the past few months.’ (you / in the past few months / do) I told him the ways I trained and

Dave was impressed. I then asked (9)

if I could become a professional weightlifter one day.’ (he / think / become / a professional weightlifter / I / one day)

Dave’s response surprised me greatly, ‘Do you know (10)

when you first started lifting weights.’ (in our team / you / we / want) That’s

how my weightlifting career started.

Indirect questions are a more polite way to ask for information, make requests or seek permission. We can use them to ask for favours without sounding demanding.

- **Could you tell me** where the library is? (asking for information)
- **I wonder** whether you could pass me a pen. (making requests)
- **May I know** if we can take photos in this gallery? (seeking permission)

Version 1

Emily is writing a letter to Mr Wong, her PE teacher, to propose new ideas for the PE lessons. Read the letter and pay attention to the underlined sentences.

Dear Mr Wong,

I am writing on behalf of Class 2A to propose some ideas for our PE lessons. I have collected feedback from the class by conducting a survey. **(1) Could you accept our suggestions?**



Nearly all of our classmates would like to play new sports, such as hockey, archery and cricket.

(2) We hope to include some of them in the coming lessons. In addition, most classmates hope to improve their basketball techniques. **(3) We want to learn advanced skills.** **(4) Could you demonstrate some challenging moves so that we can see how they are performed?**

Moreover, well over half of the class are eager to increase their fitness levels. **(5) What types of high-intensity exercise are suitable for us?** **(6) Also, how can we stay physically active at home?**

Last but not least, all of us are eager to have longer PE lessons. The PE class on Thursdays is the last lesson of the day. We are willing to stay behind until 5 pm. **(7) Are we allowed to do so?** **(8) Could you seek permission from the principal?** We love sports and we greatly enjoy your lessons. We hope our suggestions are of interest, and I look forward to the opportunity to talk with you further about this.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Leung

Version 2

Rewrite the underlined sentences in Version 1 based on the instructions.

Dear Mr Wong,

I am writing on behalf of Class 2A to propose some ideas for our PE lessons. I have collected feedback from the class by conducting a survey. **(1)** I would like to know if you could accept our suggestions.

(indirect question: *I would like to know ...*)

Nearly all of our classmates would like to play new sports, such as hockey, archery and cricket. **(2)** _____

_____ (direct question: *Could ...*) In addition, most classmates hope to improve their basketball techniques. **(3)** _____

_____ (direct question: *Could you teach ...*)

(4) _____

_____ (indirect question: *We wonder ...*)

Moreover, well over half of the class would like to increase their fitness levels. **(5)** _____

_____ (indirect question: *Could you tell us ...*) **(6)** _____

_____ (indirect question: *... we want to know ...*)

Last but not least, all of us are eager to have longer PE lessons. The PE class on Thursdays is the last lesson of the day. We are willing to stay behind until 5 pm. **(7)** _____

_____ (indirect question: *Do you know ...*)

(8) _____

_____ (indirect question: *Do you think ...*)

We love sports and we greatly enjoy your lessons. We hope our suggestions are of interest, and I look forward to the opportunity to talk with you further about this.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Emily Leung



Brain Breaks

In archery, when an arrow hits another one and splits it, it is known as Robin Hood.

