

BEFORE ONE CAN LEARN HOW TO CONSTRUCT ENGLISH QUESTIONS, ONE MUST FIRST BE FAMILIAR WITH TWO TYPES OF VERBS: AUXILIARY AND MODAL.

## Auxiliary Verbs

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This class of verbs assist other verbs in the task of forming sentence context. They modify the principle verb, and are used in both statement sentences, as well as question sentences.

The following are Auxiliary Verbs:

- |                                      |          |
|--------------------------------------|----------|
| ✓ be (am, are, is, was, were, being) | ✓ might  |
| ✓ can                                | ✓ must   |
| ✓ could                              | ✓ shall  |
| ✓ do (did, does, doing)              | ✓ should |
| ✓ have (had, has, having)            | ✓ will   |
| ✓ may                                | ✓ would  |

The most common of auxiliary verbs in the formation of questions are:

- ✓ to be; as in the question: "Are you going to the fair?"
- ✓ to do; as in the question: "Do you want to go to the fair?"
- ✓ to have; as in the question: "Have you gone to the fair?"

The verb *to be* is used for present and past continuous tense questions.

The verb *to do* is used for present and simple past tense questions.

The verb *to have* is used for present and past perfect tense questions.

Examples:

- ✓ Is he really walking home tonight?
- ✓ Do you think I am pretty?
- ✓ Has the boy lost everything?

## Modal Verbs

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The remaining Auxiliary Verbs listed above represent a subcategory called Modal Verbs.

Modal Verbs are used to express ability, permission, possibility, obligation, advice, a request or offer, and a strong belief.

The unique characteristic of Modal verbs is that they do not conjugate, there is no infinitive form, and there is no present or past participle form.

Examples:

- ✓ Can I come along with you?
- ✓ Could I visit grandma too?
- ✓ May I help with that?
- ✓ Must we always be in a hurry?
- ✓ Shall we dance?
- ✓ Should I go ahead and wait for Bobby?
- ✓ Will you be there tomorrow?
- ✓ Would you mind passing the potatoes?

## Contracting Auxiliary Verbs

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Most Auxiliary Verbs can be contracted. The only ones that can't (forget that one) are:

- ✓ may
- ✓ might
- ✓ shall
- ✓ will

## Rules for Forming Question in English

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A typical statement sentence in English commences with either a person (Tom, Sally), a pronoun (He, She, They), or a subject phrase (A dog, The red car), and precedes the verb(s).

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Examples:

- ✓ Tom is going to the mall.
- ✓ Sally has been to that movie three times.
- ✓ He can hardly hold back the tears.
- ✓ She should arrive on the noon train.
- ✓ They have a lot to do when they get home.
- ✓ A dog crossed the street.
- ✓ The red car drove off with the Senator.

To reconstruct these statements into questions, one simply reverses the Auxiliary Verb with the subject.

Examples:

- ✓ Is Tom going to the mall?
- ✓ Has Sally been to that movie three times?
- ✓ Can he hardly hold back the tears?
- ✓ Should she arrive on the noon train?
- ✓ Have they a lot to do when they get home?
- ✓ Did a dog cross the street?
- ✓ Did the red car drive off with the Senator?

You may have noticed the inclusion of the Auxiliary Verb to do in its past tense "did". This is because an auxiliary verb is necessary for the formation of a question when structured in this fashion. Notice that the Auxiliary Verbs is in the past tense, while the principle verb assumes the present.

### WH-Word Questions

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The questions asked above can all be answered with either a "Yes.", or a "No.", response. In order to attract a lengthier, more complex answer, one generally uses one of the WH-Words: *what, where, when, why, which, who(m), whose, or how.*

It is perfectly normal to accompany one of these “question words” – actually a pronoun as it is substituting for the answer to the question – with an Auxiliary Verb. It is also possible to not use an Auxiliary Verb when working in the simple present or past tenses:

- ✓ What are you going to do now?
- ✓ Where did you leave the car?
- ✓ When shall we scale the mountain?
- ✓ Why are we always losing ours Saturday games?
- ✓ Which stage will we be playing on?
- ✓ Who has gone off the deep end?
- ✓ Whose dog is this?
- ✓ How many chocolates did you eat?
- ✓ What happened?
- ✓ Which mouse ran off with the cheese?
- ✓ Who lost the bet?
- ✓ Whose pig won the contest?

Be aware that the questions *what*, *which*, and *whose* can be followed by a noun before the Auxiliary Verb:

- ✓ What time is it?
- ✓ Which way did the go?
- ✓ Whose car is the fastest?

When using *how*, one can follow it with an adjective:

- ✓ Just how fast is that car?
- ✓ How many times have I told you not to go there?
- ✓ How red is that apple?

Prepositions have a place in asking questions also. Frequently you will find them located at the ends of sentences:

- ✓ Who did you talk to?
- ✓ What were they talking about?
- ✓ Who did you talk with?

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Prepositions can start questions. They tend to sound formal and rather leading:

- ✓ With whom did you spend all your money?

### Tag Questions

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By the word "tag", I mean a short, question phrase that is generally located at the end of a statement. There are two rules to go by when constructing Tag Questions:

1. When the statement is positive, the tag is negative, and when the statement is negative, the tag question is positive.
2. The tense of the tag question is determined by the tense of the Auxiliary Verb preceding it in the statement.

Examples:

- ✓ This is a beautiful rose, isn't it?
- ✓ You're going to the concert, aren't you?
- ✓ He's not going to the concert, is he?
- ✓ You haven't been to Mass in a month, have you?
- ✓ They went to Mexico, didn't they?

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