

Lesson

Word order in questions

1 We usually make questions by changing the word order: we put the first *auxiliary verb* (AV) before the *subject* (S):

| | | | | |
|-----------|--------|---|--------|------------|
| | S + AV | | AV + S | |
| Tom | will | → | will | Tom? |
| you | have | → | have | you? |
| I | can | → | can | I? |
| the house | was | → | was | the house? |

- Will Tom be here tomorrow?
- Have you been working hard?
- What can I do? (*not* 'What I can do?')
- When was the house built?
(*not* 'When was built the house?')

2 In *present simple* questions, we use **do/does**:

| | | | | |
|----------|--------|---|------|-----------------|
| you | live | → | do | you live? |
| the film | begins | → | does | the film begin? |

- Do you live near here?
- What time does the film begin? (*not* 'What time begins...?')

3 In *past simple* questions, we use **did**:

| | | | | |
|--------------|----------|---|-----|----------------------|
| you | sold | → | did | you sell? |
| the accident | happened | → | did | the accident happen? |

- Did you sell your car?
- How did the accident happen?

! But do not use **do/does/did** in questions if **who/what/which** is the *subject* of the sentence. Compare:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>who object</p> <p>Emma telephoned somebody.</p> <p>object —————</p> <p>Who did Emma telephone?</p> | <p>who subject</p> <p>Somebody telephoned Emma.</p> <p>subject —————</p> <p>Who telephoned Emma?</p> |
|--|---|

In these examples, **who/what/which** is the *subject*:

- Who wants something to eat? (*not* 'Who does want')
- What happened to you last night? (*not* 'What did happen')
- Which bus goes to the city centre? (*not* 'Which bus does go')

Note the position of prepositions in questions beginning **Who/What/Which/Where...?**:

- Who do you want to speak to?
- What was the weather like yesterday?
- Which job has Jane applied for?
- Where do you come from?

Exercises

Exercise 1

Make questions with **who** or **what**.

- 1 Somebody hit me.
- 2 I hit somebody.
- 3 Somebody gave me the key.
- 4 Something happened.
- 5 Diane told me something.
- 6 This book belongs to somebody.
- 7 Somebody lives in that house.
- 8 I fell over something.
- 9 Something fell on the floor.
- 10 This word means something.
- 11 I borrowed the money from somebody.
- 12 I'm worried about something.

Who hit you?
Who did you hit?
Who
What
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Exercise 2

Put the words in brackets in the correct order. All the sentences are questions.

- 1 (when / was / built / this house) ...When was this house built?
- 2 (how / cheese / is / made)
- 3 (when / invented / the computer / was)
- 4 (why / Sue / working / isn't / today)
- 5 (what time / coming / your friends / are)
- 6 (why / was / cancelled / the concert)
- 7 (where / your mother / was / born)
- 8 (why / you / to the party / didn't / come)
- 9 (how / the accident / did / happen)
- 10 (why / this machine / doesn't / work)