

INDIRECT (POLITE) QUESTIONS

COMPLETE THE QUESTIONS WITH ONE OR TWO QUESTION WORDS OR AN AUXILIARY VERB

1. _____ do you earn?
2. _____ you married?
3. _____ have you been learning English?
4. _____ do you prefer, small towns or big cities?
5. _____ tall are you?
6. _____ of music do you listen to?
7. _____ religion are you?
8. _____ want to have children?
9. _____ do you go to the cinema a year?
10. _____ advice do you listen to most?
11. _____ you ever said 'I love you' and not meant it?
12. _____ did you vote for in the last election?

HOW DID YOU DO?

1. *How much* do you earn?
 2. Are you married?
 3. *How long* have you been learning English?
 4. *Which* do you prefer, small towns or big cities?
 5. *How tall* are you?
 6. *What type/kind* of music do you listen to?
 7. *What* religion are you?
 8. Do want to have children?
 9. *How often* do you go to the cinema a year?
 10. *Whose* advice do you listen to most?
 11. Have you ever said 'I love you' and not meant it?
 12. *Who* did you vote for in the last election?
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DISCUSS

- Which of the questions you just completed would be impolite to ask someone you don't know very well?
 - Are there any you wouldn't ask a friend? Why?
 - Which might you need to ask someone but wouldn't feel very comfortable about it?
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USE

- Indirect questions are polite, longer forms of normal questions. For example:
- - Where's the department store? - Direct question
- - Could you tell me where the department store is, please? - Indirect question
- - What's his name? - Direct question
- - Do you know what his name is? - Indirect question

FORM

- Indirect questions are formed of **two** parts: a polite expression, and a question which has no subject/verb inversion like a normal question. For example:
 - - What's his name? >>
 - Do you know what his name is? - Indirect question
 - Here the polite expression is "Do you know...", and the question part is "...what his name is?". Note that the subject and verb have not changed place in the question part. So if you said "Do you know ~~what is his name~~?", this would be incorrect.

- Another example:
- - What's the time? >>
 - Do you have any idea what the time is? - Indirect question
- The polite expression is "Do you have any idea...?", and the question is "...what the time is?".

The question is not "...what is the time?" - you don't invert the subject and verb like a normal question.

AUXILIARY VERB "DO"

- The auxiliary verb "to do" is used in questions when there is no other auxiliary verb. For example:
 - You like Chinese food. >>
 - Do you like Chinese food?
- Indirect questions do not use the auxiliary verb "to do" in the main question. For example:
 - When does the next train arrive? - Direct question
 - Do you know when the next train arrives? - Indirect question
 - Do you know ~~when does the next train arrive~~? - Incorrect
- Another example:
 - When does the restaurant close? - Direct question
 - Could you tell me when the restaurant closes? - Indirect question
 - Could you tell me ~~when does the restaurant close~~? - Incorrect

YES / NO □ IF / WHETHER

- If a question requires a *yes or no* answer, we must use *if or whether* between the polite question and the *actual* question part
- Do you have a driving license? Yes, I do / No, I don't.
- □ I'd like to know *if / whether* you have a driving license.
- Have you been at your current company for a long time?
- Would you mind telling me *if / whether* you've been at your current company for a long time?

POLITE EXPRESSIONS

- There are infinite ways to make indirect questions. Not all indirect questions are questions but they are polite statements which encourage a response. Some common polite expressions include:
- - I wonder (if/whether)...?
 - I can't remember (if/whether)...?
 - Could/Can you tell me (if/whether)...?
 - Would you mind telling me (if/whether)...?
- - Have you any idea...?
 - Would it be possible for you to...?
 - Is there any chance you could...?
 - I don't suppose you could...
 - I'd like to know (if/whether)...