

38 Indirect questions

Indirect questions are more polite than direct questions. They are very common in formal spoken English, particularly when asking for information.

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38.1 INDIRECT OPEN QUESTIONS

Indirect questions often start with a polite opening phrase. After the question word, the word order in indirect questions is the same as in positive statements.



Indirect questions start with an opening phrase.



Where **is** the station?

Do you know
Could you tell me } where **the station is**?

The verb comes after the subject.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

Do you know how much **the tickets will cost**?



Could you tell me why **you were** late?

Could you tell me what time **the stores close**?

Indirect questions leave out the auxiliary verb "do."



HOW TO FORM

OPENING PHRASE

Do you know

Could you tell me

QUESTION WORD

where

SUBJECT

the station

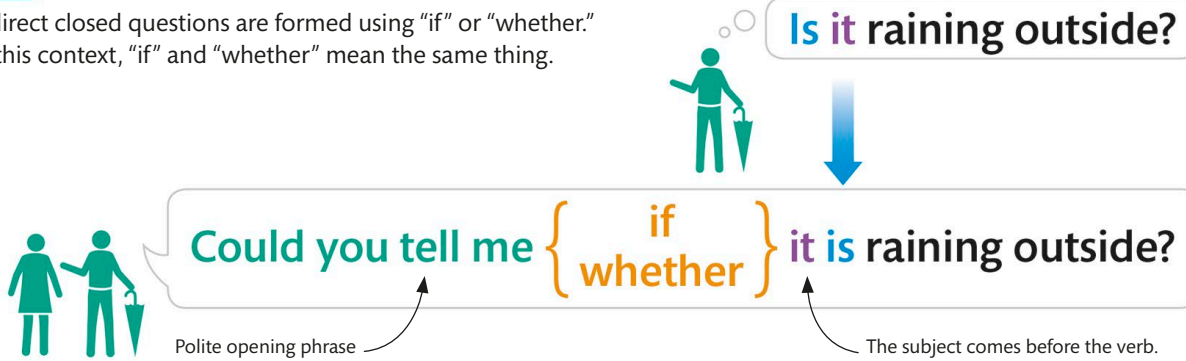
VERB

is?

A polite opening phrase comes first.

38.2 INDIRECT CLOSED QUESTIONS

Indirect closed questions are formed using "if" or "whether."
In this context, "if" and "whether" mean the same thing.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

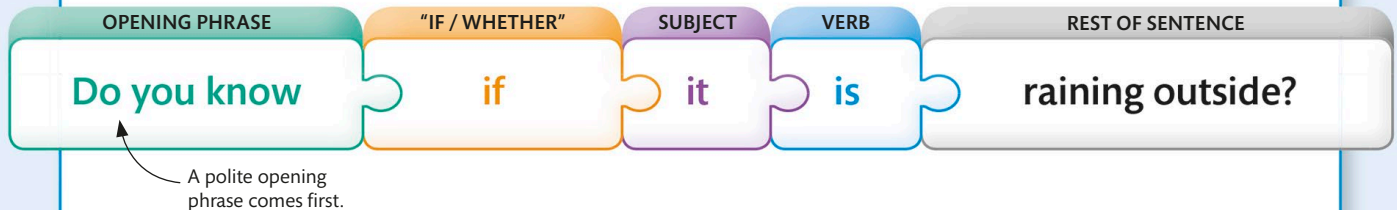


Do you know **if** that restaurant **is** expensive?



Could you tell me **whether** the train **is** on time?

HOW TO FORM



! COMMON MISTAKES WORD ORDER WITH INDIRECT QUESTIONS

When a question has an opening phrase, the word order in indirect questions is the same as in a statement. There is no inversion, and "do" is not added.

Could you tell me where **the station is**? ✓

Could you tell me where **is the station**? ✗

Could you tell me when **you close**? ✓

Could you tell me when **do you close**? ✗