

47 Reported questions

Reported questions are used to describe questions that someone has asked. Direct questions and reported questions use different word orders.

See also:

Forming questions 34

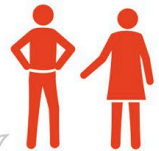
Open questions 36 Types of verbs 49

47.1 REPORTED OPEN QUESTIONS

Direct open questions are reported by swapping the order of the subject and the verb.



Where are my keys?



Adam asked me where his keys were. Have you seen them?

The subject comes before the verb in reported questions.

The tense in reported questions usually moves one tense back from the tense in direct questions.

FURTHER EXAMPLES



Why can't you come to the party?

He asked me why I couldn't come to the party.

An object can be included to say who was asked the original question.



When will they arrive?

She asked when they would arrive.

The object of the reporting verb can be left out.



HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT

REPORTING VERB

OBJECT

QUESTION WORD

SUBJECT

VERB

Adam

asked

me

where

his keys

were.

The main verb in reported questions is usually "ask."

The object can be left out.

The subject comes before the verb in reported questions.

The tense moves one tense back from direct speech.

47.2 REPORTING QUESTIONS WITH "DO"

When a direct question uses the verb "do," this is left out of reported questions.



Let's bake a cake. What **do** we need?

He asked me what we **needed**.

Reported questions leave out the auxiliary verb "do."

The past form of the verb is usually used.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

Why **do** you want to work for us?



They asked me why I **wanted** to work for them.

What **do** you think?



He asked me what I **thought**.

What **does** a florist **do**?



James asked me what a florist **does**.

The tense doesn't always change.

Where **do** Jay and Seb **live**?



Paul asked me where Jay and Seb **live**.

Who **do** you **know** at work?



She asked me who I **knew** at work.

What **do** you usually **knit**?



He asked me what I usually **knit**.

! COMMON MISTAKES WORD ORDER IN REPORTED QUESTIONS

It is incorrect to swap the verb and object in reported questions.

He asked me where **the station is**. ✓

He asked me where **is the station**. ✗

47.3 REPORTED CLOSED QUESTIONS

If the answer to a question in direct speech is "yes" or "no," "if" or "whether" is used to report the question. "Whether" is more formal than "if."



Direct question.

Are you meeting your sales targets?

My boss asked me if I was meeting my sales targets.



Reported question uses "if" or "whether."

FURTHER EXAMPLES



Will you be at the meeting on Monday?

Kara asked whether I would be at the meeting on Monday.



In reported questions with "if" and "whether," the object after "asked" can be left out.



Do you want to stay for dinner?

Ian asked me if we wanted to stay for dinner.



Reported questions with "if" and "whether" leave out the auxiliary verb "do."

HOW TO FORM



The object can be left out.

"If" and "whether" mean the same thing, but "whether" is more formal.

47.4 REPORTING QUESTIONS WITH "OR"

"If" or "whether" can also be used to report questions that use "or" in direct speech.



Does **Jo** want tea **or** coffee?

Jo, Tom asked me **if you wanted** tea **or** coffee.

The verb changes tense. ↗



FURTHER EXAMPLES



Do **you** want to go by car **or** by train?

He asked **whether we wanted** to go by car **or** by train.



Do **you** prefer wine **or** champagne?

Jo asked **me if I preferred** wine **or** champagne.



Did **you** choose to ski **or** snowboard?

He asked **whether I chose** to ski **or** snowboard.



Did **you** decide to walk **or** run?

Harry asked **if I decided** to walk **or** run.

