

# Indirect questions

## Introduction



Could you tell me where **the station is**, please?

## Definition

These are an alternative way to ask certain questions. For example:  
 Could you tell me if **it's** ready? = Is it ready?

## Construction

They consist of two questions in one sentence. There are lots of possibilities. Here are a few examples:

First question	+	Second question
Could you tell me...	if/whether	... <b>there's</b> a canteen in this building?
Can you remember...	if/whether	... <b>we ordered</b> more paper?
Do you know...	who/what/which/where/ when/whose	... <b>it is</b> ?
Does anyone recall...	where	... <b>we put</b> the file?
Did she say...	how	... <b>she fixed</b> it?
Can you confirm...	how much/many	... <b>we need</b> ?

<b>Do you have any idea...</b>	<b>how long</b>	<b>...it will take?</b>
<b>Would you mind explaining...</b>	<b>how</b>	<b>...you're going to solve this problem?</b>

### Note that

**1. In the first question, we use the usual word order for interrogatives but in the second question, we do not:**

**Do you know what is it?**   
**Do you know what it is?** 

**Could you tell me where can I find a post office?**   
**Could you tell me where I can find a post office?** 

**Can you confirm what time does the conference start?**   
**Can you confirm what time the conference starts?** 

**An exception is when there is a question word in the second part that refers to a subject rather than an object. For example:**

**Can you tell me what's wrong?**   
**Do you know who will be there?** 

**2. With 'whose', only one indirect form is correct:**

**Whose pen is this?**    **Do you know whose pen this is?**   
**Whose is this pen?**    **Do you know whose is this pen?** 

**3. We can also use question word + infinitive. For example:**

**Do you know...**  
**...what to do with this file?**  
**...when to take a coffee break?**  
**...where to go?**  
**...how many to bring?**

**Could you tell me...**  
**...how to get to the airport?**  
**...which computer to use?**  
**...whose ID to check?**  
**...who to invite?**

# Uses

Use	Examples
To be more polite, especially when talking to a stranger or someone we don't know well.	<p><b>Excuse me, do you know which platform <b>I need</b> for trains to Birmingham?</b></p> <p><b>Can you tell me whether <b>it's</b> quicker to go by bus or train?</b></p>
When we don't know if the person we're asking has the information we need.	<p><b>Do you know if <b>there's</b> a team meeting this week?</b></p> <p><b>Did you find out when <b>the parts will</b> arrive?</b></p>
When there are simply two questions involved.	<p><b>Did anyone ask whether <b>it's</b> OK for us to leave early?</b></p> <p><b>Did you notice if <b>Frank was</b> in his office?</b></p>

**Note that** we often begin with 'Excuse me' when approaching a stranger or interrupting someone to ask a question. We might also add 'please' at the end.



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