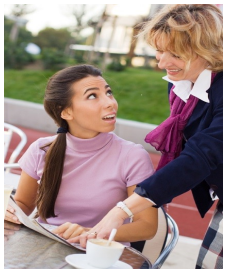
Indirect questions

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

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

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

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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