

Formation of questions: basic rules

It is important to know how to form questions. The rules given below apply to almost all written questions and most spoken questions.

Auxiliary verb before subject

In a question, the auxiliary verb comes before the subject. Note that if there are two auxiliary verbs, only the first comes before the subject. Study the examples given below.

He is working in the garage. (Statement)

Is he working in the garage? (Question)

That was a silly question. (Statement)

Was that a silly question? (Question)

They have arrived. (Statement)

Have they arrived? (Question)

She has been invited. (Statement)

Has she been invited? (NOT Has been she told?)

The above sentence contains two auxiliary verbs, but we have already learned that only the first auxiliary verb comes before the subject in a question.

She should have been more careful. (Statement)

Should she have been more careful? (Question) (NOT Should have been she more careful?)

The boys have been rewarded. (Statement)

Have the boys been rewarded? (Question)

The police have caught the thief. (Statement)

Have the police caught the thief? (Question)

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Cases where there is no auxiliary verb

Affirmative sentences in the simple present and simple past tense do not have an auxiliary verb. We use do, does or did to change them into questions.

Note that do and does are used in the present tense. Do is used with plural nouns and the pronouns I, we, they and you. Does is used with singular nouns and the pronouns he, she and it.