

Reporting questions

Indirect questions aren't questions in the strict sense of the term. They do not have the word order of typical questions. They also don't have a question mark at the end. Indirect questions are usually contained within a statement.

How to introduce an indirect question?

If the direct question begins with a question word like what, when, where, how etc., that word is used to introduce the indirect question.

Study the following examples.

Where are you going? (Direct question)

She asked me where I was going. (Indirect question)

Here the indirect question *where I was going* is the direct object of the verb asked.

Why does she want to go abroad? (Direct question)

I don't know why she wants to go abroad. (Indirect question)

Yes / no questions are usually introduced by if or whether when they become part of a statement.

Are you coming with us? (Direct question)

She asked me if I was going with her. (Indirect question)

While reporting direct questions, we backshift tenses when the reporting verb is in the past tense. When the reporting verb is in the present tense, we do not usually backshift tenses.

Negative questions are usually reported as affirmative questions.

Aren't you coming with me? (Direct question)

She asked me if I was going with her. (Indirect question)

Shall

Some British speakers use shall instead of will when the subject is I or we. When these

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statements or questions are reported, shall will become should if the subject of the indirect speech is I or we. If the subject is a second or third person noun or pronoun, shall will become would.

'I shall see you tomorrow' said Andrew.

Andrew said that he would see me the next day.