

Wh-questions with who, whom, which, how and whose

Reminder → Section E

A

Who refers to people, and can be used as subject, object or complement:

- Who** owns that car?
- Who** did you meet?
- Who** was her father?

Whom is used as a formal alternative to **who** as object, and also directly after prepositions:

- Whom** did you meet?
- To whom** were you talking?

Which is used to refer to people when we want to identify somebody in a group:

- '**Which** is your brother?' 'The one next to Luka.' (talking about a photograph)

and we can use **which** instead of **who** to talk about particular classes of people:

- Which** do you think earns more, a teacher or a police officer? (or **Who** do you think ...?)

B

We usually use **which**, rather than **who** or **what**, in questions before **one(s)** and **of**, as **which** is commonly used to ask or talk about a choice between one or more things:

- I've decided to buy one of these jumpers. **Which one** do you think I should choose?
- Which of** you would like to go first? (rather than **Who of** ...?)

C

When we use **who** or **what** as *subjects*, the verb that follows is usually singular, even if a plural answer is expected:

- What is** there to see in the town? (expects an answer giving a number of things to see; *not* What are there to see in the town?)

However, the verb can be plural in echo questions (see Unit 27E) after a plural subject or a subject consisting of two or more noun phrases joined by **and**:

- 'Mr Almeida and his family are here to see you.' **Who are** here?' (or **Who's** here?)

and when **who** and **what** function as *complements*:

- Who are** those people over there?
- What are** the consequences of the decision?

D

How or what?

How	What
<input type="checkbox"/> How was the journey? (asking a general opinion)	<input type="checkbox"/> What was the journey like? (asking a general opinion)
<input type="checkbox"/> How is your brother? (asking about general health)	<input type="checkbox"/> What do you like about the job? (asking for details)
<input type="checkbox"/> How do you like your coffee? (asking about food and drink preferences)	<input type="checkbox"/> What if your plan doesn't work? (asking about consequences)
	<input type="checkbox"/> What's it called? (asking about a name)
How / What (about)	
<input type="checkbox"/> How / What about a swim? (making a suggestion)	
<input type="checkbox"/> 'He's a bit scary sometimes.' How / What do you mean?' (asking for more information)	

E

We can use **whose** to ask about the person that owns or is responsible for something. **Whose** can be used either before a verb (as a pronoun):

- Whose are** these boots?

or before a noun or noun phrase (as a determiner) introducing direct or indirect questions:

- Whose boots** are these?
- She asked me **whose coat** I was wearing.

In formal contexts we can use a preposition before **whose** (see also Unit 55B):

- In* **whose** desk was it found? (*less formally* **Whose** desk was it found *in*?)

However, in questions without a verb a preposition comes before **whose**:

- 'We're meeting at nine.' *In* **whose** house?' (*not* Whose house *in*?)

Exercises

26.1 Underline the correct option (or both if possible). **A & B**

- 1 To *whom* / *who* should the documents be sent?
- 2 *Which* / *Who* of you is Dr Hansen? I have a message for you.
- 3 A: Here's a photo of our children at the fancy dress party. B: *Who* / *Which* is Isabella?
- 4 A: Is your sister at home? B: *What* / *Which* one do you want to speak to?
- 5 *Whom* / *Who* do you hold responsible for the damage?
- 6 *Who* / *Which* will captain the team if Zeinab isn't available?
- 7 *Which* / *Who* would you rather be – a doctor or a vet?
- 8 *Who* / *Whom* translated the book?

26.2 Complete the sentences with an appropriate present simple form of the verbs in brackets. **C**

- 1 What those cakes made from? (*be*)
- 2 Who you for Maths and English? (*teach*)
- 3 What there to see on the island? (*be*)
- 4 Who the major decisions in the company? (*make*)
- 5 A: The Turners are in France. B: Who in France? (*be*)
- 6 Who their textbook with them? Put your hands up. (*have*)

26.3 First, complete the sentences with **how**, **what**, or **how / what** if both are possible. Then choose an appropriate answer for each question. **D**

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 '..... <i>What</i> do you like about your new job?' | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | a 'It's really boring.' |
| 2 '..... if Omar calls while you're out?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | b 'I'd love one.' |
| 3 '..... about a coffee?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | c 'I mean you've got to wear a suit.' |
| 4 '..... are your parents these days?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | d 'Tell him I'll call back.' |
| 5 '.....'s your boss like?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | e 'It was great.' |
| 6 '..... do you like your new job?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | f 'Lucia Garcia.' |
| 7 '..... was the camping trip?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | g 'It's never boring.' |
| 8 '.....'s your boss called?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | h 'Quite well, thanks.' |
| 9 '..... do you mean, "Smart clothes"?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | i 'We had an excellent time.' |
| 10 '..... was the camping trip like?' | <input type="checkbox"/> | j 'She works us really hard.' |

26.4 Correct any mistakes in the italicised words or, if necessary, suggest ways of making the sentence more natural. If the sentence is already correct, write ✓. **B, C & E**

- 1 *Who's* caravan were you staying in?
- 2 *Whose are* all these books?
- 3 He asked us *who's* car was parked in front of his house.
- 4 A: *Who live* in the flat upstairs? B: The Thompson family.
- 5 *Whose* going with you to Canada?
- 6 *About whose* travels in Nepal did Liam Wilson write a book?
- 7 *What* one of the following statements is true?
- 8 *Who* of us has not told a lie at some time in our lives?
- 9 A: Can you post the books to us? B: *Whose address to?*
- 10 A: Ants have got into the fridge! B: *What has* got into the fridge?

