

## A Negative questions

We usually make a negative **yes / no** or **wh-question** with an auxiliary verb (*have, did, would, etc.*) + **-n't** to suggest, persuade, criticise, etc.

- Wouldn't** it be better to go tomorrow?       Why **don't** we go out for a meal?

In formal contexts, or when we want to give some special emphasis to the negative (perhaps to show that we are angry, very surprised, or to strongly persuade someone), we can use **not** after the subject in negative questions. This happens particularly in **yes / no** rather than **wh-questions**:

- Did she not** realise that she'd broken it? (*less emphatically Didn't she realise that ...?*)  
 **Can you not** get there a bit earlier? (*less emphatically Can't you ...?*)

B We sometimes use negative words other than **-n't** such as **never, no, nobody, nothing, nowhere**:

- Why do you **never** help?  
 Have you **nowhere** to go? (*or Do you have nowhere to go?*)

or less emphatically or more informally:

- Why **don't** you ever help?  
 Haven't you got anywhere to go? (*or Don't you have anywhere ...?*)

C We can make a suggestion with **Why not + verb** or **Why don't / doesn't ...** (*but not Why do not / does not ...*):

- Why not** *decorate* the house yourself? (*or Why don't you decorate ...?*)

**Why didn't ...** isn't used to make a suggestion, but can show that we think an action was wrong. For example, depending on intonation and context, it can be used to criticise someone:

- Why didn't** you tell me that in the first place? (*I'm annoyed that you didn't*)

## D Negative question forms, usually with a falling intonation, are used in exclamations giving opinions:

- Haven't you grown!       Doesn't she look lovely!       Didn't it snow a lot!

## E Echo questions

Echo questions are used when we haven't understood what has been said or to check that we heard correctly, perhaps because we found it very surprising. We might repeat, usually with a rising intonation, the whole of what was said:

- 'Tala's lost her job.' 'Tala's lost her job?' ↑

or focus on part of what was said using a stressed **wh-word** or a phrase with **how**:

- 'Leon's arriving at 6:30.' 'When's Leon arriving? / Leon's arriving when?' ↑  
 'We paid £3,000 for the painting.' 'How much did you pay? / You paid how much?' ↑

We can use **what** or **'do' what** to focus on the verb or part of the sentence beginning with the verb:

- 'We paid £3,000 for the painting.' 'You what?' (*or 'You did what?'*) ↑  
 'I think she's having a sleep.' 'She's what?' (*or 'She's doing what?'*) ↑

F Questions with **that-clauses**

A **wh-question** can refer to a following **that-clause**, particularly after verbs such as **expect, hope, reckon, say, suggest, suppose, and think**. We can leave out **that** in these questions:

- When** do you *reckon* (that) you'll finish the job?

However, when the **wh-word** is the subject, object or complement of the verb in the subordinate clause, we do not use **that**:

- What** did you *think* was in the box? (*not What did you think that was in the box?*)

## Exercises

27.1 Write negative questions for B in these dialogues, using -n't with the words in brackets. **A**

- A: Can you lend me €10?  
B: Again? Haven't you got any money left? (... money left?)
- A: I'm annoyed that you didn't come to the meeting.  
B: Why? ..... (... my email / on holiday?)
- A: I've had to bring the children with me.  
B: Why? ..... (... babysitter?)
- A: I'll just finish my homework before I go to school.  
B: But ..... (... be supposed to / last night?)
- A: I've put my bike in the sitting room.  
B: The sitting room! ..... (... outside?)
- A: I'm taking the coach to Vienna.  
B: But that will take ages. .... (... rather / plane?)

27.2 Use the notes to complete these dialogues with two negative questions. In the first use -n't; in the second use never, no, nobody, nothing or nowhere. **B**

- (ever / considered you might / wrong)  
A: Haven't you ever considered you might be wrong? / Have you never considered you might be wrong?  
B: No, I'm sure I'm right.
- (you / any interest / maths at all) A: ..... ?  
B: No, I've always hated it.
- A: I spent the night in the railway station. (could / find anywhere else / sleep)  
B: ..... ?
- (can / remember anything about / accident) A: ..... ?  
B: Not after getting into the car, no.
- (why / ever do well / exams) A: ..... ?  
B: Perhaps you don't revise enough.
- (there anybody / you can ask / help) A: ..... ?  
B: I can't think of anyone.'

27.3 Complete the echo questions using appropriate question words or phrases. **E**

- A: Jake's going to Chile. B: He's going where? / He's doing what? / He's what?
- A: He's leaving at the end of next week.  
B: He's leaving ..... ? / He's doing ..... ? / He's ..... ?
- A: He'll be away for three months. B: He'll be away for ..... ? / He'll ..... ?
- A: It will cost about £15,000. B: It'll cost ..... ? / It'll ..... ?
- A: He's sold his house to pay for the trip.  
B: He's sold ..... ? / He's done ..... ? / He's ..... ?
- A: He's going climbing in the Andes.  
B: He's going climbing ..... ? / He's doing ..... ? / He's ..... ?

27.4 If necessary, correct any mistakes in these sentences. Put a tick if they are already correct.

**C, D & F**

- A: Mariam isn't answering her phone. B: Why do you not email her?
- Who do you expect that will read your blog?
- Why did they suggest that we should avoid using the motorway?
- Was not it a brilliant film!
- If she really wants to go rock climbing, why not let her?
- What did you say that is in these biscuits?
- How do you think that Twitter will have changed our lives in ten years' time?
- Why did not you tell me you'd changed your number?