

B. Detail Questions

Detail questions ask about specific points in the conversation. However, the answers to these questions are generally not found in a single line of the conversation. It's usually necessary to understand the entire conversation. Some of the most common detail questions are given below, but there are other types.

Types of Overview Questions	Typical Question Words
1. Questions about time	1. When . . . ?
2. Questions about reasons	2. Why . . . ?
3. Questions about plans	3. What . . . do?
4. Questions about problems	4. What's the matter with . . . ?
5. Questions about opinions	5. What . . . think of . . . ?
6. Questions about advice	6. What . . . suggest?

Questions About Time

These questions ask when an event or activity takes place. Some time questions ask about frequency or duration. Time questions can be asked in several ways:

- *When . . . ?*
- *How often . . . ?* (frequency)
- *At what time . . . ?*
- *How long . . . ?* (duration)

The answer choices are times of day, parts of the day, days of the week, dates, years, amounts of time, and so on. Often, one or more of the distractors are mentioned in the conversation but do not answer the question. And sometimes the correct answer is not mentioned directly by the speakers.

Sample Item: Time Question

Man: So you're still leaving on Tuesday, Rita?

Woman: No, I'm going to delay my trip for a day.

Man: That's probably a good idea.

Q. When will Rita leave?

- (A) Monday.
- (B) Tuesday.
- (C) Wednesday.
- (D) Thursday.

The woman says that she is not going to leave on Tuesday; she is going to delay her trip for a day. Therefore, she will leave on Wednesday.

Questions About Reasons

These questions ask why someone does something, why someone feels a certain way, why an event occurs, and so on.

These are typical reason questions:

- *Why did . . . happen?*
- *Why is the man/woman going to . . . ?*
- *Why does the man/woman want to . . . ?*
- *Why is the man/woman upset/happy/puzzled?*

Some reason questions are negative questions:

- *Why did . . . not happen?*
- *Why does he/she not want to . . . ?*

Sample Item: Reason Question

Woman: Good morning, National Office Supplies.

Man: Yes, this is Mr. Tupton. I'm calling about an order I just received. There were twenty packages of blue paper, and we ordered white paper.

Woman: I'll connect you with the customer service department, Mr. Tupton.

Q. Why is Mr. Tupton calling?

- A** To complain about an order.
- B** To discuss a legal problem.
- C** To reassure a customer.
- D** To place an order.

The man received the wrong order, and he is calling to complain about it.

Exercise 3.5

Focus: Answering detail questions dealing with time and reasons.

Directions: Listen to the conversation. Read the question about the conversation and then choose the one option — (A), (B), (C), or (D) — that best answers the question.



Now start the audio program.

1. Why is Mr. Maras leaving?

- A** To talk to a client.
- B** To go to his office.
- C** To board an airplane.
- D** To meet his wife.

2. When will the office open again?

- A** This weekend.
- B** On Monday.
- C** On Tuesday.
- D** On Wednesday.

3. At what time will the man see the movie?
- (A) At 7:30.
 - (B) At 7:40.
 - (C) At 9:00.
 - (D) At 9:10.
4. Why does Carlos congratulate Eva?
- (A) She'll be making a lot more money.
 - (B) She found a better job.
 - (C) She's been promoted.
 - (D) She likes the region where she'll be working.
5. When did Frank start working here?
- (A) In 1997.
 - (B) In 1998.
 - (C) In 1999.
 - (D) In 2000.
6. When does Patrick hope to come to work?
- (A) At lunchtime.
 - (B) This afternoon.
 - (C) Tomorrow morning.
 - (D) Tomorrow afternoon.
7. Why did the man NOT take the shuttle bus?
- (A) He wanted to save time.
 - (B) He wanted to impress someone.
 - (C) It left without him.
 - (D) There was no room on it.
8. Why is Dan upset?
- (A) He does not have his coffee mug.
 - (B) He could not attend the conference.
 - (C) He did not get any coffee this morning.
 - (D) He could not find some important papers.
9. How long was Ms. Shearson out of the country?
- (A) For a few days.
 - (B) For a month.
 - (C) Exactly a year.
 - (D) Just over a year.
10. Why is Jim NOT going to the trade fair?
- (A) The distribution manager will not permit it.
 - (B) He is too busy.
 - (C) The trip is too expensive.
 - (D) He does not want to attend.

Questions About Plans

These questions ask what a person intends to do in the future. They can be phrased in a number of ways:

- *What is the man/woman planning to do?*
- *What plan has been suggested?*
- *What does the man/woman plan to do next?*
- *What does the man/woman want to do?*

The answer choices are four plausible plans. One or two of the distractors may be discussed in the conversation but are incorrect because the plan or plans are changed or rejected.

Sample Item: Plan Question

Woman: George, have you seen that video about new management techniques?

Man: No, but I intend to. I've heard it's interesting.

Woman: It's more than interesting — it could change your whole management style.

Q. What is George planning to do?

- A** Watch a video.
- B** Talk to the manager.
- C** Change his style.
- D** Read a book.

The woman asks the man if he has seen a video, and he responds that he intends to see it.

Questions About Problems

These questions ask about some difficulty that one or both of the speakers experience. There are several ways to phrase these questions:

- *What is the problem here?*
- *What is bothering the man/woman?*
- *What is wrong with . . . ?*
- *What is the man's/woman's problem?*
- *What is the man/woman concerned about?*
- *What is the man/woman worried about?*

The answer choices are four possible problems. One or more of the choices may be mentioned but are not the problem being asked about.

Sample Item: Problem Question

Woman: There you are. I needed that contract half an hour ago.

Man: Sorry — I tried to hurry, but I got lost on the way over here.

Woman: You should have gotten better directions.

Q. What is the problem?

- A** The contract cannot be found.
- B** The man arrived too soon.
- C** The man did not sign the contract.
- D** The contract arrived late.

The woman is upset because she needed the contract half an hour earlier.

Focus: Answering detail questions that deal with plans or problems.

Directions: Listen to the conversation. Read the question about the conversation and then choose the one option — (A), (B), (C), or (D) — that best answers the question.



Now start the audio program.

1. What is the problem with the bicycle?
 - (A) It is very old.
 - (B) There is no key for the lock.
 - (C) It has been stolen.
 - (D) There is no air in one tire.
2. What is Mr. Neufield's immediate plan?
 - (A) To postpone the meeting with Mr. Utsumi.
 - (B) To meet with the chief engineer.
 - (C) To talk with Mr. Utsumi.
 - (D) To make several phone calls.
3. What does Mary plan to do?
 - (A) Change her field.
 - (B) Go on vacation.
 - (C) Start her own business.
 - (D) Go to graduate school.
4. What is the problem here?
 - (A) The tape has broken.
 - (B) The woman dislikes the music.
 - (C) The tape recorder is out of order.
 - (D) The man can't find the tape.
5. What does Mrs. Powers plan to do before hiring Katie?
 - (A) Interview her again.
 - (B) Write her a letter.
 - (C) Give her a test.
 - (D) Contact her references.
6. What plan does the second speaker suggest?
 - (A) Traveling to Manila.
 - (B) Asking Mr. Quizon to visit.
 - (C) Changing their place of operations.
 - (D) Offering Mr. Quizon another position.
7. Why is the woman concerned about the documents?
 - (A) They have been lost.
 - (B) They contain many mistakes.
 - (C) They are not in the proper order.
 - (D) They have not been read.
8. What is wrong with the apartment?
 - (A) It is too big for him.
 - (B) It does not have enough rooms.
 - (C) It is too expensive.
 - (D) It is not in the right location.
9. What is the problem?
 - (A) The flowerpot is broken.
 - (B) The glass cannot be replaced.
 - (C) The table has not been set.
 - (D) The tabletop was damaged.
10. What does Mr. Dufour plan to do?
 - (A) Become an artist.
 - (B) Buy some art.
 - (C) Hire more advisors.
 - (D) Study art.

Questions About Suggestions

These questions ask what advice one speaker gives to another person (usually the other speaker). These questions can be phrased in various ways:

- What is the man's/woman's suggestion?
- What suggestion is made?
- What does the man/woman advise . . . to do?
- What is the man/woman suggesting?
- What is the man's/woman's advice?

Sample Item: Suggestion Question

Woman: So, do you like working here?

Man: Yes, but not as much as I thought I would.

Woman: Give it a chance — you've only been here for a month.

Q. What advice does the woman give?

- A** To stay on the job.
- B** To take a risk.
- C** To apply for another position.
- D** To give someone a present.

The man indicates that he doesn't like working there very much. The woman tells him to "give it a chance" — in other words, to stay on the job for now.

Questions About Opinions

These questions ask how a speaker feels about something or someone. These questions can be phrased in a number of ways:

- What is the man's/woman's opinion of . . . ?
- How does the man/woman feel about . . . ?
- What does the man/woman think about . . . ?

Sample Item: Opinion Question

1st man: Have you read that new book by Donald Hobart?

2nd man: I tried to, but I found it hard to follow.

1st man: So did I, but the critics sure seemed to like it.

Q. What do the speakers think of the book?

- A** It is very enjoyable.
- B** It is too critical.
- C** It is difficult to find.
- D** It is too confusing.

The second man says that he found the book "hard to follow" (confusing). The first man agrees.

Focus: Answering detail questions involving suggestions and opinions.

Directions: Listen to the conversation. Read the question about the conversation and then choose the one option — (A), (B), (C), or (D) — that best answers the question.



Now start the audio program.

1. What is Mr. Lo's advice?
 - (A) That the woman bring her child to the party.
 - (B) That the woman contact his wife.
 - (C) That his wife take care of the woman's child.
 - (D) That the couple stay home.
2. What suggestion is made?
 - (A) To cut prices.
 - (B) To reduce the number of workers.
 - (C) To get some good advice.
 - (D) To bring in fewer consultants.
3. What did the man think of the play?
 - (A) It was boring.
 - (B) He liked it better than the woman did.
 - (C) He did not see it.
 - (D) It lasted too long.
4. How does the man feel about Arlene's job?
 - (A) It provides many opportunities.
 - (B) It takes up too much of her time.
 - (C) It does not pay well enough.
 - (D) It is interesting work.
5. What does Hans suggest?
 - (A) That she go out for a meal.
 - (B) That she work in her room.
 - (C) That she have food delivered.
 - (D) That she go to sleep now.
6. What does she think they should do?
 - (A) Have the copier repaired.
 - (B) Buy some antique furniture.
 - (C) Replace the copier.
 - (D) Get some more copies made.
7. What does the first man think of the plan?
 - (A) It will never be adopted.
 - (B) It may save money.
 - (C) It will not impress customers.
 - (D) It is a waste of time.
8. What does she suggest the man do?
 - (A) Go to a nearby café.
 - (B) Wait for Ms. Bauer.
 - (C) Go to the meeting.
 - (D) Come back another day.
9. How does Donna feel about the building?
 - (A) It is not warm enough.
 - (B) It has too many windows.
 - (C) It is too stuffy.
 - (D) It is not safe.
10. What does the woman suggest the man sell?
 - (A) His business.
 - (B) His automobile.
 - (C) His exercise equipment.
 - (D) His health club membership.

C. Inference Questions

The answers for inference questions are not directly stated in the conversations. Instead, you have to draw a conclusion — called an inference — based on the information that is presented by the speakers. In other words, you have to interpret what the speakers are implying.

Inference questions can be phrased in various ways:

- *What does the man/woman imply?*
- *What is the man/woman saying about . . . ?*
- *What can be said about . . . ?*
- *What is known about . . . ?*
- *What can be inferred from the conversation?*
- *What does the man/woman mean?*
- *What is probably true about . . . ?*

Sample Item: Inference Question

Woman: Ray is certainly a good mechanic. He fixed my car in less than an hour.

Man: He is good with tools. It's hard to believe that we're brothers.

Woman: Oh, well, your talents lie in other areas.

Q. What is known about the man?

- (A) He is a professional mechanic.
- (B) He is not very good with tools.
- (C) He is going to move to another area.
- (D) He is not as tall as his brother.

Although the information in choice (B) is not stated, it can be inferred. The woman says Ray is a good mechanic; the man agrees with her and says that it's hard to believe that he and Ray are brothers, implying that he doesn't share his brother's talent with tools.

Exercise

3.8

Focus: Answering inference questions.

Directions: Listen to the conversation. Read the question about the conversation and choose the one option — (A), (B), (C), or (D) — that best answers the question.



Now start the audio program.

1. What can be inferred about their situation?
 - (A) They are having dinner by candlelight.
 - (B) The electricity is not on.
 - (C) They are examining something with a flashlight.
 - (D) It is the middle of the day.
2. What can be said about the situation?
 - (A) They are not at home.
 - (B) The sky is seldom clear here.
 - (C) The smell is unpleasant.
 - (D) They have just walked for miles.

3. What does the woman imply?
- (A) She cannot go sailing tomorrow.
 - (B) Her decision depends on the weather.
 - (C) There will not be enough wind for sailing.
 - (D) She enjoys this kind of weather.
4. What is probably true about Natalie?
- (A) She makes her own clothing at home.
 - (B) She does not need any new clothes.
 - (C) She has worked there only for a few weeks.
 - (D) She no longer works as a clerk.
5. What is the man implying?
- (A) He just started playing the piano.
 - (B) He would like to take lessons from the woman.
 - (C) He has never taken lessons.
 - (D) He does not play as well as the woman.
6. What is known about the security system?
- (A) It is generally on in the morning.
 - (B) It is an unusual system.
 - (C) It was broken when the man arrived.
 - (D) It was recently installed.
7. What can be inferred about the climate where they live now?
- (A) It has four seasons.
 - (B) It is always warm.
 - (C) It is usually cool and brisk.
 - (D) It is nicest in the autumn.
8. What can be inferred about these two?
- (A) They do not have to work today.
 - (B) They have to attend a meeting.
 - (C) They wrote the memo.
 - (D) They are not new employees.