

# Asking Questions In Spanish

## Four ways to ask questions

1) By using question words (aka - interrogatives)

eg: ¿Qué estás haciendo? What are you doing?

2) By making your voice go up at the end of the sentence.

¿Esta casa es tuya? Is this your house? (lit. This house is yours)

3) By changing the normal word order.

¿Lo has hecho tú? Did you do it? (lit. It you have done, you?)

4) Tag a question word on the end of a sentence.

Quieres venir ¿no? You want to come, don't you? (lit. You want to come, no?)

## 1) Questions words:

A) The first thing you might notice is that as well as finishing with a question mark a Spanish question will also begin with **upside down question mark**.

¿Te ha visto tú mamá? Did your mum see you?

But remember, that when only part of a sentence is a question, **in Spanish the question marks are placed around only the question part:**

Estoy feliz, ¿y tu? I'm happy, are you?

Si salga, ¿salen ellos también? If you leave, will they leave too? (lit. ... are they leaving too.)

B) The second thing you may notice is that all question words in Spanish carry an **accent**.

Eg: Te dije **que** ella estaba brava/enfadada. I told you **that** she was angry.

¿**Qué** te dijo? **What** did he say to you?

C) When using question words **the subject comes after the verb. (inverted)**

¿**Qué** estudia Juan?

What is Juan studying?

¿**Cuándo** almuerzan ustedes?

When do you-all have lunch?

¿**Dónde** está mi gorro?

Where is my cap?

¿**Cuánto** cuesta la corbata?

How much does the tie cost?

# Question Words:

¿adónde?: where .... to?

¿cómo?: how?

¿cuál?, ¿cuáles?: which? what?

¿cuándo?: when

¿cuánto?, ¿cuánta?: how much?

¿cuántos?, ¿cuántas?: how many?

¿dónde?: where?

¿de quién? or ¿de quiénes?: whose?

¿para qué?: what for? why? (for what purpose)

¿por qué?: why? (for what reason)

¿qué?: what?

¿quién?: who?

## Note about 'dónde', 'a dónde' and 'de dónde'.

¿Dónde? means 'Where? (location)    ¿Adónde? means 'To where? (destination)

¿Dónde está el supermercado?    Where is the supermarket?

¿Adónde va tu padre?    Where is your Dad going?    (Literally: To where goes your Dad?)

¿De dónde? means 'From where?'

¿De dónde es su primo?    Where is your cousin from?

## A note about prepositions:

Unlike English you can never finish a Spanish sentence with a preposition:

Who are you talking to? must become    To whom are you talking? (A quién hablas?)

Here are some more examples of question words (interrogatives) being preceded by prepositions:

a quién (to whom)

de quién (of whom),

de qué (about what, of what)

con quién (with whom)

¿De qué color es la casa?    What colour is the house?

¿De quién es esta manzana?    Whose is this apple?

¿De qué hablan ustedes?    What are you-all talking about? (lit. Of what do you-all speak?)

¿Con quién hablo?    With whom am I speaking?

¿De qué material es?    What is it made of?

## A note about using qué or cuál with 'ser' to mean 'what':

When used with the verb *ser*, *cuál* and *qué* can both mean 'what' but the meaning will be quite different.

*Cuál* is more common and indicates a selection, or choice of possibilities:

¿Cuál es la capital de España?

What is the capital of Spain?

Whereas *qué* is used to ask for a definition or an explanation:

¿Qué es la capital?

What is the (definition of) capital?

## 2) Intonation - make your voice go up at the end of the sentence.

This is a very simple way to ask questions as you can just take an ordinary sentence (declarative statement) and by making your voice go up at the end the hearer will understand that you are in fact asking a question.

This is the most common way to ask a question that you're expecting a yes or no answer to:

¿Tienes fuego? Do you have a light? (lit. you have a light)

¿Ud. quiere tomar algo? Do you want to drink something? (lit. You want to drink something.)

### 3) Changing the normal word order. (Inversion)

This is probably the most complicated of the four given methods of forming questions. But in a nutshell, you switch the normal word order of the subject (whether it's a noun or pronoun) and its accompanying verb form.

Eg. Tu quieres ir conmigo. You want to go with me. becomes ¿Quieres ir tu conmigo?

Things to remember when it comes to changing the word order of a sentence (inversion)

#### A) Pronouns tied to the conjugated verb appear after it.

Eg. ¿Ud. tiene hambre? (Are you hungry?)

becomes ¿Tiene Ud hambre? (Are you thungry?).

¿Ella va a tomar vino? (Is she going to have wine?)

becomes ¿Va ella a tomar vino? (Is she going to have wine?).

#### B) If the subject is followed by two consecutive verbs, put it after the phrase containing the second verb.

¿Uds. quieren nadar? (Do you want to swim?) simply place the subject (Uds.) after the second consecutive verb: ¿Quieren nadar Uds.? (Do you want to swim?).

It's good to also remember that the subject pronoun is usually omitted in Spanish when the subject is obvious:

¿Quieres cantar algo ahora? (Do you want to sing something now?) doesn't need the pronoun tu because the verb tense indicates that tu is the subject.

## Extra: Negative Inverted Questions:

Just put no before the inverted verb and noun or pronoun.

To change: ¿Toma caramelos tu amigo? (Does your friend eat lollies?)

to 'Doesn't your friend eat lollies?' simply put a no in front of the verb

¿No toma caramelos tu amigo? (Doesn't your friend eat lollies?).

If your verb is preceded by a direct or indirect object pronoun or if the verb is being used reflexively, the pronoun goes before the conjugated verb:

¿No los toma tu amigo? (Doesn't your friend eat them?)

¿No se ducha temprano María? (Doesn't Maria have a shower early?)

## 4) Tag a question word on the end of a sentence.

The four most common question tags that you put on the end of a statement to make a question are:

¿no?, ¿verdad? ¿no es verdad? and ¿está bien?

There is no set translation for the tags ¿No es verdad? and ¿Está bien? because they can have a variety of meanings depending on what goes before them:

Here are some examples of their meanings:

Isn't that so?

Right?

Isn't (doesn't) he/she?

Aren't (don't) they/we/you?

Question tags are generally used when you are expecting a 'yes' or 'no' answer but especially a 'yes':

Ud. quiere tomar algo. ¿No es verdad? You want to drink something, don't you?

Vamos al parque. ¿Está bien? We're going to the park, aren't we?

## Ok time to practice!

### Question Quiz

Give the questions to the following answers:

- 1) Sí, María habla español.
- 2) Voy al cine a las 7 de la tarde.
- 3) Estoy bien gracias.
- 4) Estoy llorando porque estoy triste.
- 5) Sí, Pablo está aquí.
- 6) Sí, vamos al cine.
- 7) Soy de Nueva Zelanda.
- 8) Mi número de teléfono es 445 1234.
- 9) Vamos a ir a las seis.
- 10) Mi nombre es Patricia.
- 11) Este libro es de Miguel.



## Answers:

- 1) ¿Habla María español? Does Maria speak Spanish?
- 2) ¿Cuándo vas al cine? When are you going to the movies?
- 3) ¿Cómo está/s? How are you?
- 4) ¿Por qué está/s llorando? Why are you crying?
- 5) ¿Está aquí Pablo? Is Paul here?
- 6) ¿Van ustedes al cine? Are you all going to the movies?
- 7) ¿De dónde es usted? Where are you from?
- 8) ¿Cuál es tú número de teléfono? What is your telephone number?
- 9) ¿Cuándo van a ir ustedes? When are you all going?
- 10) ¿Cuál es tú nombre? What is your name?
- 11) ¿De quién es este libro? Whose is this book?