Section 1  basic sentence types

pages 2–3

language notes

The rules for question construction revised here are those that are followed in formal written and spoken English. It’s worth pointing out to students (if they haven’t already realised) that informal speech often follows rather different rules. Declarative questions (see pages 286–288) have the same word order as statements:

*You’re coming on Friday evening, right?*

And fronting (see page 257) may bring the subject, object or another part of the sentence before the verb:

*That kid – is he pretending to be ill again?*

Some elementary mistakes may still occur at this level. Look out for problems of word order with long subjects, for omission of *do*, and for the use of *do* with question-word subjects:

*Where all those people are going?*
*What means ‘out of her mind’?*
*Which of these phones does work best?*

Informal questions ending in prepositions are difficult for most students at the early stages, since few languages have a similar structure. Some advanced students who have learnt their English mainly from written models may still have problems.

*About what did she talk?*
*For whom are you waiting?*

The CD-ROM exercises for this Section practise perceiving and producing weak forms of auxiliaries in questions, and distinguishing question and statement intonation.

possible further activities

*Personalisation: children’s questions*  If students need more practice in question formation, they could do Exercise 5 on page 15. This could be followed by a personalisation activity in which students say or write some of the questions that they asked when they were small children. Alternatively, get them to invent questions (perhaps five each) that they think small children might ask.

*Dialogues: two-word questions*  Get students into pairs, and give each pair one of the following questions. They have two minutes to prepare a mini-dialogue containing the question; then students deliver their dialogues to the class.


*Texting role-play*  Divide students into pairs or groups. In each pair/group, one takes on the personality of someone famous (living or dead), but does not tell the other(s) who he/she is. The others text or email the ‘famous people’ (out of class), trying to find out who they are by asking as many questions as they can about them (but not asking directly about their identity).

*Testing your memory*  Get each student in turn to say ‘Hi’ to one other student (not his/her neighbour). Then the students test your memory, like this:

‘Who did Maria say ‘Hi’ to?’ ‘Who said ‘Hi’ to Maria?’

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.
language notes

Mistakes with basic negative structures are unusual at this level. Look out for occasional instances of multiple negation from students whose mother tongues have this feature:

*I didn’t say nothing to nobody.*
*We didn’t hardly have time to eat lunch.*

It’s best not to tell students that this structure is ‘illogical’. It’s the regular pattern in a number of languages, was correct in Old English, and is still normal and systematic in many dialects of English.

possible further activities

‘Hardly’: confessions Get students to say or write three or more things that they can hardly do.

‘Hardly’: mime Mime being hardly able to do something (e.g. see, speak, walk, hear, stand up, sing). The class tell you what you can hardly do. Alternatively, get volunteers to do the mimes.

language notes

The distinction between *not* and *no* can be tricky. The explanation on page 5 should make things clear if necessary. However, there are cases where the same thing can be said with either structure:

*There was not time.* / *There was no time.*

and this can confuse students who may suppose that *no* in the second example goes with the verb (like *not*) rather than with the noun.

possible further activities

*Vocabulary expansion: ‘no’ or ‘not’?* Teach/revise a number of nouns and adjectives (for example, the ones listed below):

success, successful, respect, respectful, impressive, impression, encouragement, encouraging, enjoyment, enjoyable, creativity, creative, selection, selective, confusion, confusing, profit, profitable, doubt, doubtful

Then say the words, mixing up the order; students have to repeat them, putting either *no* or *not* before them. Like this:

‘money’ – ‘no money’ ‘ready’ – ‘not ready’ ‘fast’ – ‘not fast’
‘bread’ – ‘no bread’ ‘today’ – ‘not today’ ‘tickets’ – ‘no tickets’

*Notices* Students write notices (one each) for the class/city/country, using the structure NO …/ING, to stop people doing things they disapprove of.

pages 6–7

language notes

Some students find the structure of negative questions tricky, even at advanced level.

*Why she didn’t phone?*
*Is not the post office open today?*

Negative questions can have two contrasting functions: to confirm a negative belief:

*Isn’t Peter here yet? Maybe he’s missed the train.*

or to confirm a positive belief:

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.
Don't you speak German? Yes, I thought you did. Maybe you can translate this for me. However, this doesn't usually seem to cause confusion.

In some languages, answers to negative questions use the equivalent of Yes or No in order to confirm or disconfirm the questioner’s expectation. This can lead to mistakes:

‘Aren’t you working tomorrow?’ *‘Yes, I’m not.’
‘Don’t you take sugar?’ *‘No, I do.’

In English, the choice depends on the grammar of the answer, not the meaning (see the explanation on page 6).

Note that negative questions are not used to make polite requests. Compare:

You can’t help me for a moment, can you? (Polite request)
*Can’t you help me? (Complaint: = ‘Why can’t you help me?’)

A CD-ROM exercise helps students to perceive the unstressed syllables that distinguish negative questions from ordinary questions.

possible further activities

Visitor from space: confirming negative beliefs Tell the class to imagine that you are a visitor from a distant planet where everything is different! They ask negative questions to check that everything really is different. Like this

‘Don’t you have electricity?’ ‘No, we don’t.’
‘Don’t you eat?’ ‘No, we don’t.’
‘Don’t you fall in love?’ ‘Yes, we do.’

pages 8–9

language notes

Transferred negation is common with verbs like think, believe, suppose etc, especially in an informal style. Instead of putting not with the negative belief that is being talked about, we often move not to the verb of thinking, believing etc. So to report a belief that somebody is not at home, we are more likely to say ‘I don’t think she’s at home’ than ‘I think she’s not at home’, though in most cases most structures are possible. With hope, however, transferred negation is not used.

I hope they don’t attack. (not *I don’t hope they attack.)

Notice the common use of a present tense after hope to refer to the future.

possible further activities

Unfavourite activities Students complete the following sentence in three or more ways:

I never want to ………… again as long as I live.

pages 10–11

language notes

Imperatives (the use of base forms to give instructions, advice etc) should present few problems at this level, though one or two points of word order may need attention. Note the possibility of using do with be in imperatives.

Some students may still not realise that imperatives are not generally used to ask for things politely. Native English-speakers may be offended by ‘requests’ beginning with ‘Please’ and an imperative. ‘Please tell me …’, for example, is a command, not a request.
possible further activities

Misleading advice for foreigners Students work in groups to produce five or more pieces of misleading advice for foreigners visiting their country, or the country where they are studying. Each piece of advice should begin ‘Always …’ or ‘Never …’. For example:

- Always shake hands with everybody when you get on a bus.
- Never tip a taxi-driver.

When they are ready, they read out their advice in turn.

language notes

In some languages, first person plural forms can be used to make suggestions, in the same contexts as English Let’s. This can lead to mistakes or inappropriate utterances:

- *Now, we have lunch.*

Students may take time to get used to the different uses of the structure, and the differences in formality between the various negative forms. Make sure they also realise that the full form let us is very formal and uncommon.

possible further activities

Internet Ask students to look for interesting suggestions on the internet beginning “Let’s all …”. Tell them to write down three that they would like to follow, and three that they would not.

language notes

The word order of exclamations beginning How or What is complicated, and can cause problems even for advanced students:

- *How she talks fast!*

Articles may be dropped after What:

- *What ridiculous idea!*

A CD-ROM exercise helps students to practise stress in exclamations.

possible further activities

Insincere exclamations Teach/revise some formulaic exclamations that might be used to express appreciation of a present. For example:

- What (a) beautiful …!
- What (a) lovely …!
- What (a) remarkable …!
- What (a) wonderful …!
- What (an) interesting/unusual/elegant …!

Then tell students, in pairs, to give each other as ‘presents’ anything that they have on their desks or in their bags, and to reply accordingly, sounding unreasonably enthusiastic. (‘What a beautiful dictionary!’ ‘What remarkable aspirins!’)

Vocabulary expansion Bring some small things into the classroom that students may not know the names of. For example:

- a stapler, a paperclip, a hairgrip, a bottle-opener, a plug, a funnel, a skewer, a toilet roll, a magnifying glass, a keyring, a compass, a letter-opener, a glasses case, a lightbulb, a shoelace

Teach the names of the things. Then give them to students as ‘presents’. They answer as above.

Actions Individually or in small groups, students perform or mime common actions. The class compliment them enthusiastically, like this:

- How well/beautifully/wonderfully/elegantly you dance/jump/sing/smile …!
**Personalisation**  Ask students to complete the following sentence, writing about someone that they admire or have admired.

How well …!

For example:

How well my grandfather spoke Russian!
How well my girlfriend can sing!

Alternatively, get them to write something beginning ‘How badly …!’