

Imperatives and question words

English A1

What this topic teaches

Two survival tools in one topic. The **imperative** tells people what to do: *Sit down. Listen. Don't run.* **Question words** ask for information : *what, where, when, who, why, how.*

- Imperatives are the shortest sentences in English: just the base verb. *Open your books.*
- Question words start the question, and then the flip from topic 1 follows: *What do you like? Where is the bank?*
- Together they run a whole classroom: the teacher says *Open your books*, and you ask *Why?* (Internally. Ideally.)

Imperatives: the verb alone

No subject, no helper, just the base verb. The subject is always “you”, and it is invisible.

Type	Form	Example
positive	base verb	Stand up. .
negative	Don't + base verb	Don't be late.
polite	Please + verb / verb + please	Please sit down. / Close the door, please.

- *please* can sit at the front or the end. Both are polite; the end position sounds slightly warmer.
- △ The imperative has no subject, but it is not rude by itself – tone and *please* carry the manners. “*Eat!*” to a friend with cake is friendship, not aggression.
- Teachers’ favourites: *Listen. Look at the board. Don't sleep.* The last one is aspirational .

The question words

Word	Asks about	Example
what	a thing	What is this?
where	a place	Where is the library?
when	a time	When is the test?
who	a person	Who is your teacher?
why	a reason	Why are you late?
how	a way or condition	How do you cook this?

- **how** teams up with other words: *how old* (age), *how many* (countable), *how much* (uncountable or price).
- *How are you?* – *Fine, thanks.* The world’s most automatic conversation.
- △ *how many* counts, *how much* measures: *How many books? How much water? How much is this shirt?*

The order: question word first, then the flip

This is the big structural difference. Chinese keeps the question word in place: – “you like what?” English moves the question word to the front, then flips like topic 1.

Chinese order (word by word)	English
you like what	What do you like?
he is who	Who is he?
you live where	Where do you live?

- With *be*, flip *be*: *Where **is** the bank?*
- With other verbs, hire *do/does*: *What **do** you like? Where **does** she live?*
- △ Never “*You like what?*” as a real question – that is spoken surprise, the cousin of “*You are a student?*” from topic 1.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **The question word moves.** In Chinese, , , stay where the answer would go. In English they jump to the front. Practise the jump until it is automatic.
- △ **How vs what.** “How do you say in English?” asks for the word. “*What do you say...*” is also heard, but *how* is the safe exam choice for asking about words and ways.
- △ **Why questions, because answers.** *Why are you late?* – *Because I missed the bus.* The pair *why/because* is a couple; they attend every party together.
- △ **Don't double the helper.** “*What does she likes?*” – the -s moved into *does*, so *like* relaxes. Topic 7's rule still stands guard.

Say it aloud

Give three commands, ask three questions. Be kind with both.

- Open your notebook. Write one question. Don't show anyone.
- What is your favourite food? Where do you eat it? How much is it?
- Please answer in full sentences. (See? *please* at the front. Polite and grammatical .)

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. Tell your friend to sit: – **Sit down.** The base verb alone; the subject is invisible.
2. Make it polite: – **Please sit down.** / **Sit down, please.** *please* works at both ends.
3. *Nǐ xǐhuan shénme?* – **What do you like?** Question word to the front, then the helper.
4. _____ *is the library?* – **Where.** Place questions take *where*.
5. _____ *books do you have?* – **How many.** Books can be counted; *how much* measures water and prices.