

Grammar: Interrogatives

Overview

There are two basic types of closed question - simple and alternative. The simple question is one that is asking for a yes / no answer, e.g. 'Did you go to the film last night?' The alternative questions is one that suggests a range of answers, e.g. 'Did you see Harry Potter or James Bond last night?'. There is also the open question, 'What did you think of the film last night?'.

Simple questions

There are four key ways of constructing / marking simple direct questions:

1. *nonne* at the beginning of a sentence implying the answer 'yes', most easily translated as 'surely'.
2. *num* at the beginning of a sentence implying the answer 'no', most easily translated as 'surely not'.
3. *-ne* at the end of the first word with no implication.
4. using an interrogative - a question words to focus what the question is asking:

quis	who	quod	what	cur	why
ubi	where	quo	to where	unde	from where
quando	when	quantus	how much	qualis	of what sort
quot	how many	quotiens	how often	quomodo	how

Alternative questions

These are usually marked by one of three structures:

1. *utrum ...an*
utrum te laudavit an punivit?
2. *utrum ...anon*
utrum adhuc vivit an non?
3. *...an*
canem an felem emisti?

Examples drawn from the exercises

The number after each question indicates the exercise from which it has been drawn, so that you can look at the example in context.

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| 1. Quid est amicitia? | <i>Exercise 3</i> |
| 2. quid iuvat haec nullo ponere verba loco? | <i>Exercise 6</i> |
| 3. hic tamen vivit. vivit? | <i>Exercise 7</i> |
| 4. quis ullos homines beatiores vidit, quis Venerem
auspicatorem? | <i>Exercise 8</i> |
| 5. Quid est quod amara dulcia facit? | <i>Exercise 3</i> |

Further examples

1. *ubi ergo te inveni, ut discerem te, nisi in te supra me?*
Augustine, Confessions 10.26
2. *nonne ecce pleni sunt vetustatis suae qui nobis dicunt, 'quid faciebat deus antequam faceret caelum et terram?'*
Augustine, Confessions 11.12
3. *'si enim vacabat,' inquit, 'et non operabatur aliquid, cur non sic semper deinceps, quemadmodum retro semper cessavit ab opere?'* *Augustine, Confessions 11.12*
4. *quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra? quam diu etiam furor iste tuus nos eludet? quem ad finem sese*

- effrenata iactabit audacia? Cicero *In Catilinam* 1.I.1
5. num negare audes? quid taces? Cicero *In Catilinam* 1.IV.8
6. quid est, Catilina? num dubitas id me imperante facere, quod iam tua sponte faciebas? Cicero, *In Catilinam* 1.V.13
7. nonne id dicerent quod cuius probare deberent?
Cicero, *In Caecilium* VI.20
8. Primum quis coegit eos falsum putare?
Cicero *De Senectute* II.4
9. Quid est enim aliud Gigantum modo bellare cum dis nisi naturae repugnare? Cicero *De Senectute* II.5
10. Est in manibus laudatio, quam cum legimus, quem philosophum non contemnimus? Cicero *De Senectute* IV.12