

Talk a Lot

Sentence Blocks – Q & A

Q: What is a sentence block?

A: A sentence block is a group of eight consecutive sentences, made up of seven lines, that forms a two-way conversation. It consists of positive and negative sentences, and two question forms – a wh- question and two questions with inversion (“yes-no” questions).

Q: What is a starting sentence?

A: The first sentence in a sentence block.

Q: What is a wh- question word?

A: A question word that begins with “wh-”. For example, “what”, “where”, “when”, “who”, “why”, “whose”, and “which”. “How” is also a wh- question word because it contains the letters “h” and “w”. Wh- questions are asked to obtain information, rather than a “yes” or “no” answer. They have a **falling intonation**, which means that the tone of your voice does not go up at the end of the question, as it does with “yes-no” questions.

Q: What is a question with inversion?

A: Also known as a “yes-no” question, because the answer is usually “yes” or “no”, a question with inversion is a question where the subject and verb have been swapped around (or “inverted”). They always start with an auxiliary verb (be, have, or do), a modal auxiliary verb (e.g. can, will, must, should, etc.), or verb “to be”. For example, this sentence is a statement: “John is a DJ”. To make this statement into a question with inversion we need to swap around the verb (“is”) and the subject (“John”) to make: “Is John a DJ?” Questions with inversion always have a **rising intonation**, which means that the tone of your voice has to go up at the end of the question.

Q: What is an auxiliary verb?

A: Auxiliary verbs are helping verbs. They don’t have any meaning of their own in the sentence, but they help the main verb to form a verb phrase. For example, in this sentence: “Jean was riding her horse in the field for half an hour this morning”, “was” is an auxiliary verb (from verb “to be”) which works together with the main verb “riding” to make the past continuous verb form. There are three primary auxiliary verbs in English: “be”, “have” and “do”, as well as modal auxiliary verbs such as “can”, “will” and “must”.

Q: What is each of the eight verb forms used for?

A: The uses of the verb forms studied during this course can be summarised as follows:

Present Simple:	to talk about regular actions and things that are always true
Past Simple:	to talk about completed actions in the past
Present Continuous:	to talk about what is happening at the moment
Past Continuous:	to talk about continuous actions in the past: what was happening when...
Present Perfect:	to talk about past actions which are quite recent or relevant to now
Modal Verbs:	to talk about permission, possibilities, ability, and probability
Future Forms:	to talk about future plans, predictions and intentions
First Conditional:	to talk about what will happen if a certain condition is met