

Scrambled questions

Coursebook lessons often begin with questions – for example, comprehension questions or discussion questions. In this Teaching Tip, we look at various ways of ‘scrambling’ the text of these questions to produce puzzle activities which you can use to grab your learners’ attention at the start of a lesson – and to give latecomers a few more minutes to get to class!

There are four kinds of puzzle below. All of them are managed in the same way:

- 1 Make sure that learners have their books closed.
- 2 Display the scrambled questions on the board (or give them on a handout).
- 3 Learners work in pairs or small groups to ‘decode’ and write the original questions.
- 4 For feedback, simply ask learners to check their questions against the originals in the coursebook.
- 5 Learners are now ready to do / discuss the questions.

Jumbled questions

Original question:

- 1 Vijay wants to visit a friend at his new house in Basingstoke, England. Look at his coach ticket.**

- 1 Where’s he travelling from?
- 2 Where’s he going?
- 3 Is it a single or a return ticket?
- 4 What’s the departure date?
- 5 How much did the ticket cost?

EXPRESSCoach

PASSENGER TICKET

From: London Victoria
To: Basingstoke
Type: OPEN RETURN
Service: 022
19 May
Adult: 01 Child: 00
Total Fare: £15.45

English Unlimited Elementary, Unit 9

The same questions with the words mixed up:

1. from he is travelling Where ?
2. going he is Where ?
3. a return a Is ticket or it single?
4. is date the What departure ?
5. cost did How the much ticket ?

Shunted questions

Original question:

2 Talk together. Find out about each other's shopping habits.

- 1 Do you like shopping? Why? / Why not?
- 2 How often do you buy books? What about magazines and music?
- 3 What do you enjoy buying? What don't you enjoy buying?
- 4 Do you use the internet for shopping? What do you usually buy?

English Unlimited Elementary, Unit 6

The same questions with all the spaces and punctuation taken out:

1. *doyoulikeshoppingwhywhynot*
2. *howoftendoyoubuybookswataboutmagazinesandmusic*
3. *whatdoyouenjoybuyingwhatdontyouenjoybuying*
4. *doyouusetheinternetforshoppingwhatdoyouusuallybuy*

To make this more challenging, you can take out the numbering as well:

*doyoulikeshoppingwhywhynothowoftendoyoubuybookswataboutmagazine
sandmusicwhatdoyouenjoybuyingwhatdontyouenjoybuyingdoyouusethe
internetforshoppingwhatdoyouusuallybuy*

Vowel-less questions

The questions with all the vowel letters (a, e, i, o, u) taken out:

- 1 *D y lk shppng? Why? / Why nt?*
- 2 *Hw ftn d y by bks? Wht abt mgzns nd msc?*
- 3 *Wht d y njy byng? Wht dn't y enjy byng?*
- 4 *D y s th ntrnt fr shppng? Wht d y slly by?*

Phonemic questions

Original question:

1 In pairs, ask and answer the questions.

- 1 When was the last time you got together with old friends? What did you do?
- 2 How do you usually invite people to your home:
by email, phone, text, or face to face?

English Unlimited Elementary, Unit 10

The same questions in phonemic script:

1. wen wəz ðə la:s taɪm jə got tə'geðə wɪð əʊl frenz? wɒt dɪd jə du:?
2. hau də jə 'ju:ʒəli: ɪn'vaɪt 'pi:pəl tə jə hæʊm – fəʊn, tekst, ɔ: feɪs tə feɪs?

We've focused here on questions, but you can use exactly the same techniques with sentences (e.g. true or false statements) and short texts (e.g. the introduction to a reading or listening).