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Question Marks

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Question Marks

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Question marks have one main use, to indicate when a direct question or inquiry has been made.

However, writers need to distinguish direct questions from indirect questions before determining if a question mark is required.

Question Marks



A direct question is structured using an “inquiry” word at the beginning. An indirect question will place or embed the question within a larger sentence.

When a question is direct, you need to use a question mark at the end to indicate this. A direct question will often begin with a who/what/where/why/when/how word.

When a question is indirect, you need to use a period at the end to indicate this. An indirect question will often begin with the person/people who are asking the question.

Please see the following slides for examples of direct versus indirect questions.



Question Marks

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Direct Question	Indirect Question
Who spilled orange juice all over the counter and didn't clean it up? <i>Kitty did it! Kitty did it!</i>	I wish I knew who spilled orange juice all over the counter and didn't clean it up. <i>Kitty did it! Kitty did it!</i>
What is the temperature outside?	They wondered what the temperature was outside.
Where did I leave my keys?	I don't know where I left my keys.
Why do I have to get out of bed?	Most children wish they knew why they have to get out of bed.
When is this library book due?	I forget when this library book is due.
How does your mother make her carrot cake?	My mother wants to know how your mother makes her famous cake.

Question Marks

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Question marks are sometimes used with quotation marks and sometimes not. It can get confusing where to put the question mark, but there is a pretty clear rule:

If the entire sentence is a question, put a question mark after the final quotation marks.

If the entire sentence is not a question but only contains a question, put a question mark before the final quotation marks.

Please see the next slides for examples.

Question Marks

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One of my favorite songs from the 1960s is Carole King's "**Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?**"

>>>>>This is a sentence that contains the question "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?" The question mark only applies to the song title, so it goes inside the final quotation marks. Note that you don't also need a period since a question mark can end a sentence on its own (along with periods and exclamation points).

Have you ever heard anything as amazing as George Winston's piano composition tribute to Pachelbel called "Variations on the Canon"?

>>>>>This entire sentence is a question, so the question mark applies to the entire sentence. Therefore, the question mark goes outside of the final quotation marks.

P.S. If you love piano music, [click here](#).

