



LESSON A.9

ASKING QUESTIONS

问问题 WÈN WÈNTÍ

LESSON A.8 REVISION



Construct words/phrases from the below characters:

四川
sīchuān

结
jié

早
zǎo

饮
yǐn

一罐
yī guàn

大
dà

一杯
yī bēi

一碗
yī wǎn

可乐
kělè

酒家
jiǔjiā

啤酒
píjiǔ

菜
cài

料
liào

餐
cān

白饭
báifàn

账
zhàng



- Forming a question in Chinese can be straightforward.
- In English, we move a sentence structure from **subject-verb-object** (e.g., He is a policeman.) to **verb-subject-object** (e.g. Is he a policeman?) to form a yes/no question. This is not required in Chinese.
- In most cases, Chinese use **interrogative pronouns** at the end of a question. They can also be found in the beginning or middle of the sentence, without a clear cut rule.
- **Question particles** 吗 (ma), 呢 (ne), 吧 (ba) are always put at the end of a sentence. This is further illustrated in the appendices.
- Always put pronouns (he, she, you etc) in front of a question. In one to one conversation, "you" can be dropped.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

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Interrogative Pronoun

English	Chinese	Pinyin
What	什么	shénme
When	几时	jǐ shí
Who	谁	shuí / shéi *
Whom	谁	shuí / shéi *
Why	为什么	wèishénme
Which	哪	nǎ
Where	哪里	nǎlǐ
How	如何	rúhé
How about	怎么样	zěnme yàng
How much/ many	几多	jǐ duō
"yes-no"	吗	ma
What about	呢	ne
...right?	吧	ba

Example

English	Chinese	Pinyin
What is this?	这是什么?	zhè shì shénme
When is dinner?	几时吃饭?	jǐshí chīfàn
Who is he?	他是谁?	tā shì shéi
To whom?	给谁?	gěi shéi
Why worry?	为什么担心?	wèishénme dānxīn
Which one?	哪一个?	nǎ yīgè
Where are you?	你在哪里?	nǐ zài nǎlǐ
How to make it?	如何做?	rúhé zuò
How about this?	这个怎么样?	zhège zěnme yàng
How many people?	几多人?	jǐ duō rén
Is it?	是吗?	shì ma
What about him?	他呢?	tā ne
This is mine, isn't it?	这是我的吧?	zhè shì wǒ de ba

Note: "shéi" tends to be colloquial, common with northern accent.

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LEADING A QUESTION WITH 请问



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请问!

qǐngwèn

Excuse me!

(May I ask?)

请问, 厕所在哪里?

qǐngwèn cèsuǒ zài nǎlǐ

Excuse me, where is
the toilet?

请问, 多少钱?

qǐngwèn duōshǎo qián

Excuse me, how
much is it!
(More less money)

请问, 发生了什么事?

qǐngwèn fāshēngle shénme shì

Excuse me, what has
happened?
(Happened what matter)

ASKING ABOUT AGE



你多大了?

nǐ duōdàle

How old are you?
(informal)

我十八岁了。

wǒ shíbā suìle

I'm already 18 years
old.

你爸爸几岁?

nǐ bàba jǐ suì

What is your father's
age? (formal)

他今年三十五岁

ta jīnnián sānshíwǔ suì

He is 35 years old this
year.

ASKING ABOUT NATIONALITY



你是哪国人?

nǐ shì nǎ guó rén

What nationality
are you?

我是英国人。

wǒ shì yīngguó rén

I'm British.

你从哪里来?

nǐ cóng nǎlǐ lái

Where are you from?
(You from where come?)

我来自上海

wǒ láizì shànghǎi

I come from Shanghai.

ASKING ABOUT TIME



几点了?

jǐ diǎnle

What time is it?

现在是下午六点四十五分。

xiànzài shì xiàwǔ liù diǎn sìshíwǔ fēn

Now is 6:45pm.

你几点下班?

nǐ jǐ diǎn xiàbān

What time do you finish work?

我五点下班。

wǒ wǔ diǎn xiàbān

I am off duty at 5 o'clock.



你的生日是哪天?

nǐ de shēngrì shì nǎ tiān

When is your birthday?

(Your birthday is which day?)

我的生日是这个星期六。

wǒ de shēngrì shì zhège xīngqíliù

My birthday is this Saturday

你的生日是几号?

nǐ de shēngrì shì jǐ hào

What is your date of birth?

我的生日是1993年8月9号。

wǒ de shēngrì shì yījiǔjiǔsān nián bā yuè jiǔ hào

My birthday is 9th August 1993

ASKING ABOUT FAMILY



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有兄弟姐妹吗?

yǒu xiōngdì jiěmèi ma

Do **you** have any sibling?

我有一个哥哥和两个妹妹

wǒ yǒu yīgè gēgē hé liǎng gè mèimei

I have an elder brother and two younger sisters.

有孩子吗?

yǒu háizi ma

Do **you** have children?

我没有孩子

Wǒ méiyǒu háizi

I don't have children.

ORDERING FOOD AND DRINKS



你们喝什么?

nǐmen hē shénme?

What would you like to drink?

我想要一杯啤酒, 好吗?

wǒ xiǎng yào yī bēi píjiǔ, hǎo ma

I would like a beer, please

(please = is it okay?)

想吃什么?

xiǎng chī shénme

What would (you) like to eat?

我想要鸡蛋炒饭。

wǒ xiǎng yào jīdàn chǎofàn

I wold like egg fried rice.



请您帮帮我, 好吗?

qǐng nín bāng bāng wǒ, hǎo ma

Would you please
help me?

请把您的电邮地址给我, 好吗?

qǐng bǎ nín de diànyóu dìzhǐ gěi wǒ hǎo ma

Could I have your email
address please?

请你在这里签名, 好吗?

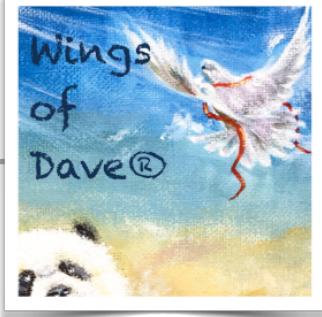
qǐng nǐ zài zhèlǐ qiānmíng hǎo ma

Could I please have your
signature here please?

你会介意打开窗户吗?

nǐ huì jièyì dǎkāi chuānghù ma

Would you mind opening
the window?



吗 (**ma**), 呢 (**ne**) and 吧 (**ba**) are used to form questions by placing **at the end of a sentence**.

- 吗: for asking 'yes / no questions'
- 呢: for reciprocal questions and queries
- 吧: for tag questions

吗 (**ma**)

It converts statements into simple '**yes / no** **questions**', and is often the equivalent of swapping the position of the subject and verb in English.

Examples

1. 你是中国人。 (<i>Nǐ shì zhōngguórén</i>)	'You are Chinese.'
→ 你是中国人吗? (<i>Nǐ shì zhōngguórén ma</i>)	'Are you Chinese?'
2. 这是他的。 (<i>Zhè shì tāde</i>)	'This is his.'
→ 这是他的吗? (<i>Zhè shì tāde ma</i>)	'Is this his?'
3. 她踢足球。 (<i>Tā tī zúqiú</i>)	'She plays football.'
→ 她踢足球吗? (<i>Tā tī zúqiú ma</i>)	'Does she play football?'



呢 (ne)

This particle is not limited to simple 'yes / no' questions - it can be used to make more **open enquiries**. It has two uses for forming questions:

1. Reciprocal questions

Examples

Speaker A asks 你身体好吗? (*nǐ shēntǐ hǎo ma?*) 'Are you well?'

Speaker B responds 我很好... (*wǒ hěn hǎo...*) 'I'm well...'

and adds:

1. 你呢? (*nǐ ne?*) '...and you?'
2. 你妈妈呢? (*nǐ māma ne?*) '...and your mum?'
3. 你家人呢? (*nǐ jiārén ne?*) '...and your family?'

2. Queries - equivalent to 'what about' or 'what actually' in English.

Examples

1. 我呢? (*wǒ ne?*) 'What about me?'
2. 这是什么呢? (*zhè shì shénme ne?*) 'What actually is this?'



吧 (ba)

1. Question Particle

吧 is used to form **tag questions**. These are used after a statement that the speaker thinks is correct, but would like **to confirm**. This is the equivalent of adding an **inverted form** of the question to the end of the sentence in English, or following a statement with '...right?'.

1. 你叫小王吧? (nǐ jiào Xiǎowáng ba?)	'Your name is Xiaowang, isn't it?'
2. 你吃素吧? (nǐ chīsù ba?)	'You are a vegetarian, right?'
3. 她是老师吧? (tā shì láoshī ba?)	'She's a teacher, isn't she?'
4. 对吧? (duì ba?)	'Right?'

2. Sentence Particle

吧 is used to make instructions **less direct**. It marks and **softens** commands, requests and suggestions. It turns a slightly pushy instruction into a **more neutral** one.

All of the below examples would still work without 吧, they would just be more direct.

1. 我帮你吧。 (wǒ bāng nǐ ba.)	'Let me help you.'
2. 快点吧! (kuài diǎn ba!)	'Hurry up!'
3. 你来吧。 (nǐ lái ba.)	'Why don't you do it?'
4. 给我点儿纸吧。 (gěi wǒ diǎn er zhǐ ba.)	'Can you give me some paper?'

CLASSROOM EXERCISE A.9: QUESTION AND ANSWER

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- Working as a pair, one asks a question and the other replies, and vice versa.

to ask

问
wèn

to reply

回答
huídá



1

2



3

4

