

SPEAKING – Asking Questions



The CELBAN includes a role play where you interact with an assessor (acting as a standardized patient). You will have to ask questions to gather information. Using grammar accurately to form questions is important in obtaining the right information. Asking direct and precise questions helps to elicit clear answers.

How to form questions

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF QUESTIONS.

Yes/no question: Sometimes the only answer that we need is yes or no.

Do you have any allergies? The answer is “yes” or “no.”

WH-question: Sometimes we want more than yes or no for an answer.

When asking for information, we usually place a question-word at the beginning of the sentence. The question-word indicates the information that we want, for example: where (place), when (time), why (reason), who (person)

Where do you live? The answer is a piece of information – the person’s address.

Form of a yes/no question:

Auxiliary verb + subject + main verb

Form of a WH-question:

Question word + auxiliary verb + subject + main verb

The auxiliary verbs are **be, do, have**, and modals are **can, will, should, might, etc.**

BE (am, is, are, was, were): main verb “be” or progressive tenses

Are you in pain?

What **is** your name?

Were you **experiencing** any pain?

When **are** you **planning** to see your doctor?

DO (do, does, did): simple tenses

Do you **smoke**?

When **did** you **quit** smoking?

HAVE (has, have, had): perfect tenses

Have you ever **had** surgery?

How long **have** you **been using** this medication?

Modal verbs:

May I take **take** your temperature?

When **will** you **see** your doctor?

Form questions to obtain the following information from a patient.

1. age
2. children
3. past history with surgery
4. onset of symptoms
5. family history of chronic disease

(1. How old are you? 2. Do you have any children? 3. What kind of surgery have you had? 4. When did this start? 5. Does anyone in your family have a chronic disease?)

You can form questions in other ways

Indirect questions: These are more formal and are often used to ask sensitive questions.

Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?

Can you tell me what your symptoms are?

Abbreviated questions and intonation:

If you are asking questions in a list, it is not always necessary to repeat the question. You can use rising intonation to signal a question.

Have you ever experienced muscle pain?
What about swelling? Or weakness?