Restating Questions

Restating questions means repeating the question, if it is short, or rephrasing it, if it is longer. It is important for nonnative speakers of English to restate questions to ensure correct comprehension and to allow thinking time before answering. Restating questions benefits the whole class: Students who did not hear the original question do not miss any information, and the teacher is able to change irrelevant or confusing questions into questions that will be of use to the entire class.

One of the difficulties of restating questions is getting the grammar right. Look at the following examples. What differences do you notice between the original question and the restatement?

Yes/No question: Can we hand in our assignment tomorrow?
Possible restatement: You would like to know if (whether) you can hand in your assignment tomorrow.

Wh-Question: How long do we have to do the assignment?
Possible restatement: You would like to know how long you have to do the assignment.

You have probably noticed that you must make three changes in the grammar:
1. The addition of if or whether for a yes/no question
2. A change in the subject from we to you
3. A change in the word order of the question from question word order (verb-subject) to statement word order (subject-verb) for most questions.

Practice restating questions:

A. Restate the following questions:
   1. What is the lab assignment this week?
   2. When do we have to turn in the assignment?
   3. Is there going to be a make-up lab?
   4. Can we hand in the assignment next week instead?
   5. We aren't going to have a test on this?
   6. Why aren't we going to have a quiz on this chapter?
   7. Are we going to have a review session before the test?
   8. Do you want us to hand in our reports now or later?
   9. Has Dr. Martin decided yet whether the test will be cumulative or not?

B. > Student A formulates a typical question that might be asked during a class, lab session or office hours and addresses that question to Student B.

   > Student B restates the question.