

Direct questions:

Note: all question words, when used as questions, are accented on first mora except いかが₂.

なに₁、どこ₁、どれ₁、どちら₁、だれ₁、どなた₁、どう₁、いつ₁、いくら₁、いくつ₁、なんじ₁

Note: all question words, when used as questions, require case particles (not comparison).

何が₁いい? 何を₁飲む? 何時₁に₁食べる? いつ₁を₁食べる? どの₁お箸₁で₁食べる?

Who?:

- だれですか [= Who is it? (not used directly to the person)] (誰)
どなたですか [= Who is it? Who are you?] (何方)
どなたさまですか [= Who might it/you be?] (どちら様)
どちらさまですか [= Who might it/you be?]
 そちら様はどちら様ですか。 [= With whom am I speaking? (very polite telephone question)]
 お名前は? [= What is your name? (polite)]
 きみの名は? [= What is your name? (to kids)]
 あんた、だれだ。 [= Who the #\$\$%* are you?]
あいつはいつたい、どこのどいつだ。 [= Who the what from where in tarnation is that guy?]

What?:

- なにが₁いい? [= What (would be) good?]
どれが₁いい? [= Which one is good?]
 犬のこ₁とって、英語で何と言₁うん₁ですか? [= What are 'inu' called in English?]

When, how much time, how many {also see time and quantity handouts}:

- なんじ (何時) に行く? [= When (what hour) will you go?] (=fixed time word, takes に)
何時ごろ (ころ/頃) ですか。 [= About what time will it be? {used for points in time}]
何時何分 (なんじなんぶん) ですか。 [= What is the hour and minute?] (=fixed)
何時間かかりますか? [= How long will it take?]
何時間ぐらいかかりますか? [= About how long will it take?]
いつ (何時) ですか。 [= When (what date or time) is it?] (=relative time word, takes を)
いくらかかりますか。 [= How much does it take? (usu. money or time)]
どのくらいかかりますか。 [= Approximately how much does it take? (usu. money or time)]
おいくつ? [= How old are you? (expecting a number you can count on your fingers)]
何歳ですか? / (お) 歳は? [= How old are you? (polite but too personal to ask w/o good reason)]
 ビール、何本飲₁んで₁んの、君? [= How many beers have you had, kiddo?]
いくつありますか? [= How many do you have?]
どのくらいありますか? [= How much do you have?]

Where?:

- どこですか。 どこにありますか? どこでたべますか? どこがいいですか?
どちらですか。 “ “
どっちですか。 [= Which direction is it? {lit. 'which alternative?'}] (何方)
どの道₁で行きますか。 [= Via what road will we go?]

How and why:

- どうですか。 [= How is it? (e.g., now that you've eaten it)]
具合はどう? [= How is (your) condition? (e.g., given that you had a headache)]
お寿司、いかがですか。 [= How would you like to have some sushi?]
なんでそんなこと言うの? [= Why would you/she say such things?]
どうしてそんなこと言うの? [= How come you say those things?]
人間はなぜ悩₁むのか。 [= Why is it that humans are tormented by their concerns?]
お好み焼₁き₁って、どうや₁つ₁て作₁るの? [= So how are you supposed to make 'okonomiyaki'?]
 この漢₁字、どうや₁つ₁て読₁むの? [= How does one read this kanji?]

If, and alternatives:

- 行₁きましたか? [= Did you go?]
 ビールかウイスキーか、どち₁が₁いい? [= Which is better, beer or whiskey?]

Indirect questions: If you ask too many direct questions, you can get to be a pain (“Mommy, what’s *this*?”). You can also extract information by making a premise and hoping for agreement (or correction); or posing a half-sentence (お名前は?); or other indirect means such as simply engaging in conversation.

Questions and sentence endings:

言った？ [= Did you tell him? (soft, socially close)]
言ったか？ [= Did you tell him or not? (socially close, but abrupt, accusatory, said half to oneself)]
言ったの？ [= So you told her? (soft, socially close)]
言ったのか？ [= So (am I to conclude) that you told her? (abrupt, socially close)]
言わなかった？ [= Did you not tell her? (soft, close)]
言わなかったか？ [= You didn't tell her? (abrupt, accusatory, said half to oneself)]
言わなかったの？ [= So what it amounts to is that you didn't tell her? (but soft)]
言わなかったのか？ [= So am I to conclude that you didn't tell her? (abrupt, close, partly to oneself)]
言わない？ [= Won't you tell her?]
言わなかったかな。 [(with sentence-final elongation): = Hmm, I wonder if he didn't tell her...]
雨？ [= Is it rain(ing)?]
雨か？ [= Its raining, is it? (half to self)]
雨だか？ [= So it's gonna be rain, is it? (masculine, abrupt)]
雨なの？ [= Is it that its raining (...which would explain why you're wet)? (m or f)]
雨なのか？ [= So its raining, is it (...which would explain why everyone's wet)? (abrupt, half to self)]
雨じゃない？ [(with elongation, lilting up at end): = It's raining, isn't it? (anyone would assume it is...)]
cf 雨じゃない。 [(accent on -1, with elongation, dropping at end): = Can't you see, it's raining!!]
cf 雨じゃない。 [(accent on な, cutoff end): = It's not raining. (so there)]

Note the many ways that questions are expressed (besides the inclusion of direct question-words):

- Sentence-final か basically says "I'm asking you a question here," which can serve well when the lines of communication are shaky or not yet firmly established (as is often the case in distal communication), but tends to be redundant when other forms are used. In socially close contexts, it is associated with abruptness, masculinity, and it also has undertones of self-direction similar to つけ.
- Sentence-final prosody changes, such as a slight elongation with lilt up or a drop-lilt, can imply a question.
- When combined with negatives, the question is softened, because it says to the listener "it really is okay if you contradict me...in fact, I'm almost hoping you'll contradict me...so, really, won't you contradict me???"
- The question mark ? is (obviously) a relatively recent (1890s) addition, and is used *optionally* to further clarify that some sentences are questions, but other than that it doesn't say anything about pronunciation.

Questions embedded in questions:

どこに行ったか、知らない？ [= Do you know where she went?]
どうすればいいか、訊いた？ [= Did you ask what we should do? Note the kanji.]
だれがどこに行ったか、言わなかった？ [= Didn't she say who went where? Note multiple Q's.]

Questions embedded in statements:

どうすればいいか、まだ考えていない。 [= I still haven't considered what we ought to do about it.]
なんだか知らないけど今日は DVD の日。 [= I have no idea what it's about, but today is "DVD Day."]
これ、どうやって読むか先生に教えてもらった方がいいよ。 [= You should get prof to tell you how to read this.]
くすり薬を買ったかどうか知る訳ないよ。 [= How should I know whether he bought drugs or not?]

Questions words can be used with comparison particles for various meanings:

With も and positive context, for 'every...'

いつもいます。 [= He's always there.]
どこにもある。 [= They're everywhere.]

With も and negative context, for 'none at all...'

だれも来なかった。 [= No one came.]
何も無い [= There is nothing.]

Also:

どうも変だ。 [= It is somehow strange. = This doesn't add up.]

With でも and positive or negative:

何でもある。 [= They have anything and everything. = We've got it all.]
何でもない。 [= Oh, nothing. = What I said just then was nothing at all. I didn't say it.]
だれにでもできる SUDOKU. [= Sudoku that anyone can do!]

With か.

何か変だ。 [= There's something wrong with this.]
何か見ましたか。 [= Did you see anything (such as a movie)?]

Miscellaneous and irregular expressions:

何はともあれ... [=Whatever the whys and wherefores may be...]
どうぞ入ってください。 [= By all means, please come in.]