



GRAMMAR PRACTICE

Indirect Questions in Public Services

Public Places and Services | Polite questions | Cambridge IGCSE ESL 0511

1. Lead-in discussion

Talk with a partner. You may already use this grammar without noticing it.

No.	Question
1	How would you ask politely where the library is?
2	What might you ask at a hospital reception desk?
3	How can visitors ask about opening times politely?
4	What information do people need at a sports centre?

2. Grammar in context

Read the text. The bold phrases show the grammar used in a natural topic context.

Asking for Help Politely

At a community centre, visitors often need information. A student might ask, **Could you tell me where the library is?** rather than using a very direct question.

At a hospital reception desk, patients may ask, **Do you know when the clinic opens?** or **Could you explain how I can make an appointment?** Polite questions can make the conversation sound calmer.

Tourists and local residents also use indirect questions in parks, libraries and sports centres. For example, **Could you tell me if the pool is open today?** is clearer and more polite than shouting a short question.

3. Notice the pattern

Use indirect questions to sound more polite. After the opening phrase, use normal statement word order.

Use	Form / signal	Example
Wh- question	Could you tell me + wh- + subject + verb	Could you tell me where the library is?
Yes/no question	Do you know if/whether + subject + verb	Do you know if the pool is open?
No auxiliary inversion	where it is, not where is it	Could you tell me where it is?
Polite opening	Could you tell me / Do you know / Can you explain	Can you explain how I can register?

4. Build accurate sentences

Complete each sentence using the grammar focus. Then write two examples of your own.

No.	Prompt	Use	Your answer
1	Where is the library?	Could you tell me	
2	When does the clinic open?	Do you know	
3	Is the pool open today?	Could you tell me if	
4	How can I register for the event?	Can you explain	

1. _____

2. _____

5. Use it in exam answers

Complete the tasks using the grammar focus naturally.

Task	What to do
Speaking	Role-play asking for help at a library, hospital or sports centre.
Writing	Write three polite questions for a visitor who needs information about local services.
Reading	Underline the indirect questions in the context text.

6. Common mistakes

Correct the mistakes.

No.	Mistake	Your correction
1	Could you tell me where is the library?	
2	Do you know when does the clinic open?	
3	Can you explain how can I register?	
4	Could you tell me is the pool open?	

7. Topic discussion questions

Use these for pair work, small-group discussion, or speaking-test warm-up practice.

1. Why is politeness important in public places?
2. Which public service is most useful in your local area?
3. What questions might a visitor ask in your town?
4. Do people communicate politely enough in public places?

Indirect Questions in Public Services

4. Build accurate sentences

1. Could you tell me where the library is?
2. Do you know when the clinic opens?
3. Could you tell me if the pool is open today?
4. Can you explain how I can register for the event?

Own answers will vary. Check that the grammar focus is accurate and natural.

6. Common mistakes

1. Could you tell me where the library is?
2. Do you know when the clinic opens?
3. Can you explain how I can register?
4. Could you tell me if the pool is open?

Notes for checking

1. Wh- question: Could you tell me + wh- + subject + verb - Could you tell me where the library is?
2. Yes/no question: Do you know if/whether + subject + verb - Do you know if the pool is open?
3. No auxiliary inversion: where it is, not where is it - Could you tell me where it is?
4. Polite opening: Could you tell me / Do you know / Can you explain - Can you explain how I can register?