

Interrogativos

Interrogatives are question words. The root *inter* means *between [people]* and *roga* means *beg*. So, when you interrogate others, you're essentially begging for an answer. They are perfectly free to ignore you. In a legal interrogation, the police must beg and barter for information. The guilty suspect often trades what he knows for a lighter sentence.

Spanish interrogatives include:

cómo	how
cuál	which
cuáles	which - plural
cuándo	when
cuánto	how much
cuántos	how many
adónde	to where
de dónde	from where
dónde	where
para qué	what for (for what purpose)
por qué	why
qué	what
quién	who(m)
quiénes	who(m) - plural

Examples of their use:

¿Cómo estás tú?	How are you?
¿Cuál color prefieres?	Which color do you prefer?
¿Cuáles dos tomas?	Which two are you taking?
¿Cuándo llegas?	When do you arrive?
¿Cuánto necesitas?	How much do you need?
¿Cuántos niños tienes?	How many kids do you have?
¿Adónde va Paco?	Where is Paco going to?
¿De dónde es Ana?	Where is Ana from?
¿Dónde está Marcos?	Where is Marcos?
¿Para qué loquieres?	What do you want it for?
¿Por qué juegas con él?	Why do you play with him?
¿Qué tienes en la bolsa?	What do you have in the bag?
¿Quién tiene mi libro?	Who has my book?
¿Quiénes son esos chicos?	Who are those boys?

Helping Words

As you can see from the list above, interrogatives such as *adónde* and *de dónde* require the use of helping words. There are numerous combinations of words used to form questions. For example:

con quién	with whom	¿Con quién vas al baile?	Who are you taking to the dance?
de quién	of/from whom	¿De quién es ese lápiz?	Whose pencil is that?
a quién	to whom	¿A quién le pertenece esto?	Who does this belong to?
de qué	of/from what	¿De qué color es el coche?	Of what color is the car?
en qué	in what	¿En qué casa vive Gonzalo?	In what house does Gonzalo live?
a qué	at what	¿A qué hora aterriza el avión?	At what hour does the plane land?

In the questions above, notice that the interrogative by itself would not work. For example, if you remove the word "de" from the question, *¿De qué color es el coche?* ... it states that the car is the color itself, rather than being painted with the color. A car is not a color; a car is a car. When, in English, we say, "The car is blue," we really mean to say that it is a car that has been covered in blue paint.

Pluralization

Unlike English, some interrogatives in Spanish are pluralized, such as *cuáles*, *cuántos*, and *quiénes*. In English, we must add helping words to indicate plurality. For example:

¿Cuáles son los hijos de María?
¿Quiénes son los encargados?

Which [ones] are Mary's children?
[Which people] are in charge?

Losses in Translation

Some questions in Spanish seem ill-formed, but upon close examination, make perfect sense. For example:

¿Cuál es la fecha?

What is the date?

Notice that the question in Spanish actually ask *which* is the date. That sounds strange to English speakers. However, if you consider that the date is really one number taken from a series of 28, 30, or 31, the question makes perfect sense. In other words, which of the numbers (1-31) is today's number?

To be grammatically precise, the question *What is the date?* means *What is the definition of the word date?* When a native Spanish speaker hears such a question for the first time, he is quite reasonable to be confused that we expect him to provide the day's number on a calendar.

Quiz

Translate the following sentences.

1. Which house do you suggest?
2. Where are you going?
3. How many fingers does Count Rugen have?
4. Who are those boys?
5. What is love?
6. When does she close the store?
7. What do you need the ruler for?
8. How are your parents?
9. Where are they from?
10. Which ones do y'all prefer?
11. Where is my sister?
12. Why is the sky blue?
13. Whose hat is that?