

Word Order in Statements with Embedded Questions

Why is it important to cite sources?

The article explains why it is important to cite sources.

Sometimes, we need to ask questions within our statements. This is especially true in academic writing since it is better to avoid direct questions when using a formal tone. When we use statements with questions embedded in them, it is important to pay attention to the sentence word order after the question word. From this handout, you will learn how embedded questions are formed differently from regular questions and discover strategies for checking the use of embedded questions in your writing.

Background

In the first example above, we have a regular question with inverted word order: there is a question word *why*, followed by the auxiliary verb *is*, followed by the subject *it*. In the second sentence, we have the same question, but this time it is embedded in a statement. Embedded questions are structured differently than direct questions:

	Regular Question	Embedded Question
While regular questions take inverted word order, embedded questions take regular sentence word order.	Where <u>did</u> the data <u>come</u> from? Question word + <i>aux verb</i> + <u>subject</u> + <u>main verb</u>	It is unclear where the data <u>came</u> from. Question word + <u>subject</u> + <u>main verb</u>
Sometimes, an embedded question will not have a question word. If the clause is a yes/no question, we can use <i>whether</i> or <i>if</i> .	<u>Did</u> the research <u>solve</u> the problem? <i>Aux verb</i> + <u>subject</u> + <u>main verb</u>	Many scholars wonder if <u>the research</u> <u>solved</u> the problem. If/ whether + <u>subject</u> + <u>main verb</u>
A question embedded in a statement also takes regular sentence punctuation. We use a period, not a question mark, at the end of an embedded question.	Why is it important to cite sources?	The article explains why it is important to cite sources.

Strategies

- See if you use questions in your writing. Since questions are uncommon in academic writing, it is better to avoid them and turn them into statements.
- To make sure that the word order in embedded statements is correct, look for question words in the middle of the sentences, and check that a question word is followed by a subject and verb (not an auxiliary verb).

Practice

Identify all the embedded questions in this text. Circle the question word or *if/whether*, underline the subject, and underline twice the main verb (see the example in the first sentence).

Although these studies have investigated professional development for childcare providers, it is still not clear **how** researchers should fully understand this area whether some programs are more effective than others or not. Researchers need to ask what types of programs will have the greatest effects on the providers practices, and in turn on the children in their care. Additionally, much research is still needed to gain insight into the opinions of the providers. Since they are the ones that will be directly affected by these trainings, researchers should investigate what providers hope to get out of trainings, and ask what they think works best in training. They should also question how trainings could be more accessible to workers. Perhaps more qualitative studies in this area can investigate how trainings can be most effective for providers. Researchers should also ask which ways are best for informing providers about trainings. Finally, researchers could compare professional development opportunities to see if home-based providers have more or less opportunities available to them than center-based providers.

Practice passage adapted from Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers. (2009). Ann Arbor, MI: The Regents of the University of Michigan.

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