

## GRAMMAR EXPLANATION

### *What is an embedded question?*

An embedded question is a question included in another question or statement. Embedded questions feel less abrupt, and so have a softening effect. For example, compare the following:

A: What time is it? (simple question)

B: Sorry. I don't know the time. (simple statement)

A: Do you know what time it is? (embedded question in a question)

B: Sorry. I don't know what time it is. (embedded question in a statement)

### *What is the sentence structure?*

Embedded questions in statements and questions follow the same pattern. This is true for both wh-questions and yes/no embedded questions. Let's look at the following:

main question/statement | interrogative | subject | verb | object/complement

A: Do you know | what | time | it | is?

B: I don't know | what | time | it | is.

A: Do you know | if | it | is | 2:00?

B: I don't know | if | it | is | 2:00.

Notice the sentence structure following the interrogative (question word). Because embedded questions are noun clauses, they follow the structure of a statement and not a question. In other words, always use: subject + verb + object/complement.

Do you know | what | time | is | it? (incorrect)

I don't know | what | time | is | it. (incorrect)

### *How are embedded questions used?*

The speaker can use the following phrases when asking a question or providing a statement:

<i>main questions</i>	<i>embedded question</i>	
Do you know	What	<i>subject + verb + object/complement</i>
Do you remember	Where	
Can you tell me	When	
Could you tell me	Who	
	Why	
	How	

## Skill Builders: Grammar – Embedded Questions

Upper-Intermediate

<i>main statements</i>	<i>embedded question</i>	
I don't know	If whether	<i>subject + verb + object/complement</i>
I can't remember		
I'm not sure		
Please tell me		

Here are some examples of questions:

*Do you know what* the housing market will be like next year?

*Do you remember when* President Clinton got impeached?

*Can you tell me* the way to the nearest bus stop?

And here are some examples of statements:

*I don't know how* I'll be able to retire at 65. It's so hard to save money nowadays!

*I can't remember why* I decided to get an MBA.

*He's not sure if* he can fly in for the wedding next month.

*Is there any additional information on embedded questions?*

No, there isn't.

### ACTIVITY

Here is an activity to practice using reported speech correctly.

***Make an embedded question with the prompt and the question.***

**Do you know** *what his name is?* \_\_\_\_\_ .

*What is his name?*

**1.** Do you know \_\_\_\_\_ .

*Why can't I find a new job?*

**2.** I'm not sure \_\_\_\_\_ .

*Where can I get discount tickets to Spain?*

**3.** Could you tell me \_\_\_\_\_ .

*How much is everything with tax and shipping?*

**4.** Do you remember \_\_\_\_\_ .

*When and where did we first meet?*