

GRAMMAR -S2-4-: interrogative pronouns

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS

Definition: To interrogate is to ask someone questions. **Interrogative pronouns** ask questions.

<u>Interrogative Pronouns</u>				
Things	Things or People	People		
What	Which	Who	Whom	Whose

What: is used to ask about things. Do not use it to ask about people.

*There's a really strange mixture in that pot. **What** did you put in there?*

***What** is being used to ask about the ingredients in the pot.*

Which: is used to show a choice among two or more items.

*Of all the items on the menu, **which** do you recommend?*

In this scenario, the waiter is being asked to choose which menu item he likes best.

Note:

Which can also be used to indicate a choice or distinction among two or more people.

*I see two girls making a sand castle. **Which** is your sister and which is your cousin?*

Whose: is a possessive pronoun used to find out whom something belongs to.

*I see a stray flip flop on the floor. **Whose** is it?*

*Using **whose** is a shorter way to ask questions such as **Who** owns the flip flop? or **Whom** does the flip flop belong to?*

Each of these interrogative pronouns can be used as either singular or plural. Most of the examples in this lesson are singular, but below are a few plural examples.

***What** are these bugs called?*

*Of all these brand names, **which** are the best quality?*

*There are five cars parked in front of this house. **Whose** could they be?*

Who vs. Whom

Who is a subject pronoun. You use it ask for information about what people are doing or who they are.

***Who** wants to go hiking this weekend?*

***Who** is the man with the long beard?*

Whom is an object pronoun. It is used to find out *whom* an action is being done to, not *who* is doing an action. It is also used with prepositions.

***Whom** do you know in this class?*

*Whom is the object of the verb **know**.*

***Whom** are you wrapping that gift for?*

*Whom is the object of the preposition **for**.*

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The preposition *for* tells us that someone is receiving the gift (not giving it), so it is necessary to use *whom* and not *who*. (Traditionally it was never acceptable to use a preposition at the end of a sentence or question, but this rule has been relaxed in recent years.)

Do the examples of *whom* sound a little odd to you? You're not alone! Using *whom* in casual conversation can sound formal and stuffy, so when we talk to each other we often use *who* instead. It's all right to continue to use *who* during informal conversation or even in informal writing, but with all formal writing you must use *whom* for the objective case and *who* for the subjective case.

Hint:

Use *who* in a question when you would answer it with *I, he, she, we, or they*. Use *whom* when you would answer the question with *me, him, her, us, or them*. In other words, use *who* in a question if you would answer it with a subject pronoun, and use *whom* in a question if you would answer it with an object pronoun.

Who would like some ice cream? **I** would like some ice cream.

Who went to the fair? **They** went to the fair.

Who, I, and they are all subject pronouns. You wouldn't say *would like some ice cream* or *went to the fair*.

Whom did you ask for cookies? You asked **him** for cookies.

To **whom** did you wave? You waved to **me**.

Whom, him, and me are all object pronouns. You wouldn't say *you asked for cookies* or *you waved to*.

Interrogative pronouns exercise

Complete the following sentences using appropriate interrogative pronouns.

1. _____ did you do then?

- What
- Which
- How

2. _____ would you like to eat?

- What
- Which
- Who

3. _____ is knocking at the door?

- What
- Which
- Who

4. _____ is your phone number?

- What
- Which
- Who

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5. _____ do you want to see?

- What
- Who
- Whom
- All of the above

6. _____ will he say?

- What
- How
- Who

7. _____ did you see?

Please select 2 correct answers

- What
- Who
- Whom

8. About _____ are you speaking?

- who
- whom
- what
- All of the above

9. _____ came here in the morning?

- Who
- Whom
- What

10. By _____ was this book written?

- who
- whom
- what

11. _____ do you mean?

- What
- Why
- How

12. _____ do you think took the money?

- Who
- Whom
- Why

13. _____ is better – wisdom or riches?

- Which
- What
- Either could be used here

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14. _____ do you think is right?

- Who
- Whom
- What

15. _____ is a continent?

- Which
- What
- Why

Answers

1. What did you do then?
2. What would you like to eat?
3. Who is knocking at the door?
4. What is your phone number?
5. Who/whom/what do you want to see?
6. What will he say?
7. Who/whom/what did you see?
8. About who/whom/what are you speaking?
9. Who came here in the morning?
10. By who/whom was this book written?
11. What do you mean?
12. Who do you think took the money?
13. Which/what is better – wisdom or riches?
14. Who do you think is right?
15. What is a continent?