

1.6

Questions can be difficult

Consider why the following examples are difficult:

You don't have time for a quick chat, do you?

I was wondering whether you might be able to spare a few minutes for a quick chat.

Both are more difficult to understand than you might think. The first begins with a negative structure 'You don't have...' Until the 'do you' is added at the end **it's unclear this is actually a question.** The E2 speaker has to mentally unravel this language.

The second is even more confusing as it's a very indirect way of asking a question. It begins with a past tense, 'I was wondering', and that can be **misleading**. After all, it's about something that might happen in the future.

So, what's the solution?

Both questions could be replaced by 'Can we talk?' If you're worried it's too abrupt, using **the right tone** and adding the person's name will also help you to **sound polite**.



ACTION ITEMS

- Avoid long, indirect questions. Use more direct question forms (Can you/Will you/Do you/Is there etc.).
- Allow time for the E2 speaker to answer your first question before asking more questions.