Types of Questions

There are four kinds of questions in English: general, alternative, special, disjunctive.

1. A **general** question requires the answer “yes” or “no” and is spoken with a rising intonation. General questions are formed by placing part of the predicate (i.e. the auxiliary or modal verb) before the subject.

   E.g.  
   
   Do you like art?  
   May I come in?

   Sometimes such questions have a negative form and express astonishment or doubt. In Russian the words “Разве … не”, “Неужели...” are used in such questions.

   E.g.  
   
   Haven’t you seen him yet?

2. An **alternative** question denotes choice and is spoken with a rising intonation in the first part and a falling intonation in the second part. It consists of two general questions connected by means of “or”, one of the questions can be elliptical.

   E.g.  
   
   Are you a first or a second year student?

3. A **special** question begins with an interrogative word or phrase (Where..., How..., Why..., How many..., What colour..., etc.) and is spoken with a falling intonation. The order of words is the same as in general questions but the interrogative word or phrase precedes the auxiliary verb.

   E.g.  
   
   Where do you live?

   When a special question is put to the subject or to an attribute of the subject, the order of words is that of a statement. (i.e. no inversion is used). The notional verb comes in the 3rd person singular or plural.

   E.g.  
   
   Who lives in this house?  
   Whose pen is on the table?  
   Whose children are playing here?  
   What colour are the walls?

4. A **disjunctive** question requires the answer “yes” or “no” and consists of two parts: an affirmative statement followed by a negative question or a negative statement followed by an affirmative question. The first part is spoken with a falling intonation, the second part – with a rising intonation.

   E.g.  
   
   He is a student, isn’t he?  
   You are not tired, are you?