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DUTCH FOR BEGINNERS

Lesson 5: asking questions (vragen stellen)

This is the **summary** of lesson 5 in the course DUTCH FOR BEGINNERS. In the online video, I've only explained how to make open questions with **question words**, but in this summary, I will also teach you how to make yes/no questions.

After reading the theory, you can take the quiz and do the exercise. And as extra homework, I'd like you to write down questions (open and closed) to ask your Dutch friends, family, colleagues, etc.

In Dutch, as in many languages, there are two types of questions:

1. Open questions (*open vragen*)
2. Yes/no questions (*ja/nee-vragen* or *gesloten vragen*)

For the open questions, we use question words, such as *waar*, *waarom*, *hoe*, *wanneer*, etc. I will go into more detail later. The yes/no questions, on the other hand, always start with a verb. Look at these two examples:

1. Waar woon je? (open question with *waar*)
Where do you live?
2. Woon je in Den Haag? (yes/no question with the verb *woon*)
Do you live in Den Haag?

As you can see, question 1 is open, the person answering can say anything, and question 2 is closed because the person answering can only confirm or deny that (s)he lives in Den Haag.

Well, let's now take a closer look at both types of questions:

I. Open questions with question words (open vragen met vraagwoorden)

These are the Dutch question words:

1. Waar Waar werk je?
Where Where do you work?



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| 2. Waar vandaan
Where ... from | Waar kom je vandaan?
Where are you from? |
| 3. Hoe
How | Hoe gaat het?
How is it going? |
| 4. Hoe oud
How old | Hoe oud ben je?
How old are you? |
| 5. Hoe lang / hoelang
How tall / how long | Hoe lang ben je? - Hoelang blijf je in Italië?
How tall are you? – For how long are you staying in Italy? |
| 6. Hoeveel
How many / much | Hoeveel broers en zussen heb je?
How many brothers and sisters do you have? |
| 7. Hoe laat
“How late” | Hoe laat is het?
“How late is it?” (What’s the time) |
| 8. Wanneer
When | Wanneer ben je jarig?
When is your birthday? |
| 9. Waarom
Why | Waarom studeer je Nederlands?
Why are you studying Dutch? |
| 10. Wat*
What | Wat wil je doen?
What do you want to do? |
| 11. Welk/welke**
Which | Welke docent heb jij? - Welk boek lezen we?
Which teacher do you have? - Which (what) book are we reading? |
| 12. Wie
Who | Wie is zij?
Who is she? |

****About “welk/welke”**

This is the only question word that you need to decline accordingly with the gender of the noun. We have neutral nouns (with *het*), and masculine/feminine nouns (and all plurals) which take *de*. When a noun is a “de-word” (or if it’s a plural), you use *welke*, and when it’s a “het-word”, you use *welk*.



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For example:

1. *Welke* les, *welke* naam, *welke* docent → “de-words”
2. *Welk* boek, *welk* huis, *welk* meisje → “het-words”

BUT: when you make a plural of a “het-word” it takes *de* and then you use *welke*:

3. *welke* boeken, *welke* huizen, *welke* meisjes

*About “wat”

You cannot place *wat* in front of a noun (like you can do in English). So, *wat* comes in front of a verb and *welk(e)* in front of a noun.

II. Closed questions (gesloten vragen)

Well, most of the questions above, we can also ask them in a closed way. What we do is that we look for the verb in the sentences and start the questions with those. In Dutch main sentences, we start questions with the conjugated verb. Sometimes, in spoken language, we don't start with the verb, but we make a standard declarative sentence with a question's intonation. Well, that's not what we're going to do now, because now we are going to take a look at the basics of asking yes/no questions!

Let's start again with the open questions and formulate them in a closed way:

OPEN:

1. Waar *werk* je?
Where do you work?
2. Waar *kom* je vandaan?
Where are you from?
3. Hoe *gaat* het?
How is it going?
4. Hoe oud *ben* je?
How old are you?

CLOSED:

- Werk** je bij een taalschool?
Do you work at a language school?
- Kom** je uit Syrië?
Are you from Syria?
- Gaat** het goed?
“Is it going well?”
- Ben** je dertig jaar (oud)?
Are you thirty years old?



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| 5. Hoe lang <i>ben</i> je?
How tall are you? | Ben je 1.80 (1 meter 80)?
Are you 1.80? |
| 6. Hoeveel zussen <i>heb</i> je?
How many sisters do you have? | Heb je 2 zussen?
Do you have 2 sisters? |
| 7. Hoe laat <i>is</i> het?
"How late is it?" | Is het half negen (20:30)?
Is it half past eight (20:30)? |
| 8. Wanneer <i>ben</i> je jarig?
When is your birthday? | Ben je jarig in oktober?
Is your birthday in October? |
| 9. Waarom <i>studeer</i> je Nederlands?
Why are you studying Dutch? | Studeer je Nederlands voor de liefde?
Are you studying Dutch for love? |
| 10. Wat <i>wil</i> je doen?
What do you want to do? | Wil je uitgaan?
Do you want to go out? |
| 11. Welke docent <i>heb</i> jij?
Which teacher do you have? | Heb jij Kim als docent?
Do you have Kim as a teacher? |
| 12. Wie <i>is</i> zij?
Who is she? | Is zij jouw nieuwe vriendin?
Is she your new girlfriend? |