

**\*“What do you like sports?”**

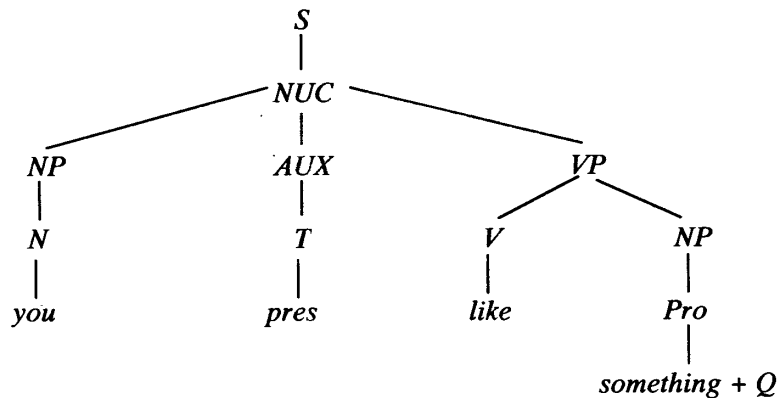
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“What do you like sports?” How many times have you heard Japanese students of English say this? It is a common error, but of course there is an explanation as to why students produce this sentence.

**Grammar Rules**

Students first learn how to produce, “What do you like?” The following rules are applied to produce this question.

Output of base: you pres like something + Q



**Wh-replacement:**      *wh*-word replaces the part of the sentence being questioned      *you pres like what*

**Wh-fronting:**      *wh*-word moves to the front of the sentence      *what you pres like*

**Subject/auxiliary inversion:**      the subject and the first auxiliary are inverted      *what you pres like*

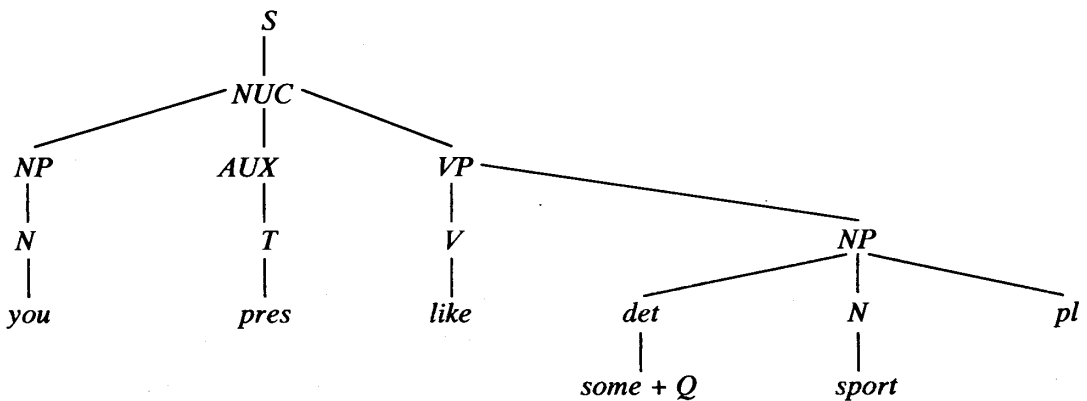
**DO support:**      *DO* is added to carry the tense since there is no auxiliary verb      *what pres DO you like*

Affix attachment (IX):  
*DO + pres --> do*      *what DO + pres you like*

Morphological rules:  
*DO + pres --> do*      *What do you like?*

The same rules are applied to produce the question "What sports do you like?" There is one change however. Since "what" modifies "sports", both must move to the front of the sentence.

Output of base:



*Wh - replacement:*

*wh - word replaces the part of the sentence being questioned*

*you pres like what sports*

*Wh - fronting:*

*wh - word is moved to the front of the sentence with the word it modifies*

*what sports you pres like*

*Subject / auxiliary inversion:*

*the subject and the first auxiliary are inverted*

*what sports you pres like*

*DO support:*

*DO is added to carry the tense since there is no auxiliary verb*

*what sports pres DO you like*

*Affix attachment (IX):*

*DO + pres --> do*

*what sports DO + pres you like*

*Morphological rules:*

*DO + pres-- → do*

*What sports do you like?*

***Problem – “What do you like sports?”***

*Students learn the wh – fronting rule used in the first case; therefore, they can produce the question “What do you like?” Students have difficulty learning the wh – fronting rule used in the second case. They cannot make the necessary change. They do not move “sports” with the modifier “what” to the front of the sentence, so they have problems producing “What sports do you like?”*

***Reasons for “What do you like sports?”***

*One reason students have difficulty producing “What sports do you like?” is because they first learn “What do you like?” They copy “What do you like?” over and over again in their notebooks. This sentence is drilled repeatedly in class. The students learn the wh – fronting rule used in this case, but because of the repetition, it becomes frozen and fixed. They then have trouble learning the modified wh – fronting rule used in the second case. As a result, they do not move “sports” along with “what” to the beginning of the sentence. “Sports” stays at the end of the sentence, and students say “What do you like sports?”. The repetition and drills actually hinder the students from learning the wh – fronting rule used in the second case.*

*Another reason students have trouble producing “What sports do you like?” is because they don’t hear this structure enough. It is important for them to hear this structure in context before they can be expected to produce it. They don’t hear enough natural English to acquire this structure.*

***Summary***

*In the case of “What do you like sports?”, students errors are caused partly by excessive drills and the fact that they don’t hear enough natural English. Drills and a lack of exposure to English also hinder students from acquiring other grammar. Teachers can help their students learn English by providing them with the natural English they need to hear instead of excessive grammar drills that have no context.*