

wo- Compounds

Wo-compounds are used in questions when asking about the object of the preposition ('for what', 'about what', etc.). Wo does not mean 'where' in these compounds; instead, in English we use 'what' in these questions. Wo-compounds follow the same rules as da-compounds, in particular the difference between people and things. When the object of the preposition is a thing, we must use a wo- compound when asking a question about it. For example:

Womit rasierst du dich?	<i>What do you shave with?</i>
Ich rasiere mich mit dem Rasierapparat.	<i>I shave with an electric razor.</i>
Worüber sprichst du?	<i>What are you talking about?</i>
Ich spreche über das Buch.	<i>I'm talking about the book.</i>
Worauf freust du dich?	<i>What are you looking forward to?</i>
Ich freue mich auf das Wochenende.	<i>I'm looking forward to the weekend.</i>

Note that the German wo- compound corresponds to two English words, 'what' at the beginning of the sentence and the preposition 'with/about/to' at the end. In English, you can also put both 'about' and 'what' at the beginning ('About what are you talking?'), although this is not very common in everyday speech.

Also note the **-r-** added when the preposition begins with a vowel.

Like the da-compounds explained above, German differentiates between people and things when using wo- compounds. When asking about a person, German uses forms of the who-word, wer: these are **wen** (accusative) and **wem** (dative).

Auf wen wartest du?	<i>For whom are you waiting? (Whom are you waiting for?)</i>
Ich warte auf Karl .	<i>I'm waiting for Karl.</i>
Mit wem fährst du nach Chicago?	<i>With whom are you going to Chicago? (Whom are you going to Chicago with?)</i>
Ich fahre mit meinem Freund .	<i>I'm going with my friend.</i>

Again, English speakers usually put the preposition at the end of the sentence, but other than word order, German and English are essentially the same here. Remember that when the object is a person, you must use wen/wem, and this means you need to know whether the preposition takes the accusative or dative case! When the object is a thing, use a wo- compound.