Spanish Question Structure

I. Questions which request a simple yes or no are called yes/no questions. In Spanish, these questions are formed in either of two ways:

¿ Verb + (subject if expressed) + rest of question ?

OR

¿ Verb + rest of question + (subject if expressed) ?

Check out these examples:

Is Juan studying? ¿Estudia Juan?
Does Carmen earn money? ¿Gana dinero Carmen? OR ¿Gana Carmen dinero?
Do Luis and Julia study a lot? ¿Estudian mucho Luis y Julia? OR ¿Estudian Luis y Julia mucho?

Yes/no questions can also be formed by adding a “tag word” to the end of a statement. Tag words in Spanish include ¿verdad? and ¿no?.

The following are examples of using tag words:

You are coming to the party, right? Vienes (tú) a la fiesta, ¿verdad?
Mr. Colina speaks French, doesn’t he? El Sr. Colina habla francés, ¿no?

In yes/no questions, the voice rises at the end of the sentence.

II. Questions that ask for specific information rather than a simple yes or no are called information questions. In Spanish, information questions follow this pattern:

¿ Question word(s) + verb + (subject if expressed) + rest of sentence ?

Question words include:

¿Dónde? Where? Location as response, used with ESTAR
¿Adónde? To where? Location as response; answer will contain “A” or “AL”, used with IR
¿De dónde? From where? Location as response; answer will contain “DE” or “DEL”
¿Cuántos (-as)? How many? Number or quantity as response, agrees in gender with the noun
¿Cuánto (-a)? How much? Number or quantity as response, agrees in gender with the noun
¿Cómo? How? Adverb or adjective as response, used to describe
¿Qué? What? Noun or verb as response
¿Cuál(es)? Which? Noun as response, agrees in number with the noun
III. To answer a question in Spanish you must know first who the subject of the question is. You can follow the same procedures on the “Spanish Sentence Structure” reference sheet to figure out the subject. Once the subject has been identified, you can use the following chart to answer the question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SINGULAR SUBJECTS</th>
<th>PLURAL SUBJECTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Person/ Subject in the question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Person/ Subject in the answer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person singular (yo)</td>
<td>2nd person singular (tú or Ud.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person singular (él, ella, it, a name, a noun)</td>
<td>3rd person singular (yo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person plural (nosotros, as or anyone + yo)</td>
<td>2nd person plural (ustedes or anyone + tú or Ud.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person plural (él, ella, it, a name, a noun)</td>
<td>3rd person plural (ellos, ellas, plural noun or compound subject)</td>
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- All questions will begin with an upside-down question mark. This is a signal to the reader that the words that follow are a question. Since often the subjects of sentences are dropped off, it is possible to have the same exact words acting as a statement or as a question. The punctuation tells the reader how the sentence should be interpreted.
- *Quiénes* is the plural form of *quién*. It is used when the person asking the question expects more than one person as a response. It is followed by the *ellos* form of the verb. Both *quién* and *quiénes* can be the subject of a sentence.
- Both *cuál* and *qué* can be translated as “what” in English. However, the verb *SER* is most commonly used with *cuál*. *Qué* is used only when the speaker is asking for a definition.
- Note the accents on all the question words. You will have to memorize their placement.
- Also note *por qué* as a question is TWO WORDS, whereas *porque* as an answer is ONE WORD and is written without an accent.