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# How to respond to HOW ARE YOU? 8 Examples

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You've probably heard the question **How are you?** many times. In fact, it's probably one of the first things you've learned how to say in English. Because it's such a simple question, knowing how to respond to it may seem pretty straightforward, but sometimes it can be a little more complicated than that.

In this article, we'll look at a bunch of situations where people ask and respond to **How are you?** in different ways.

First, let's look at a classic example conversation using this phrase:

*A: Hello, how are you?*

*B: I'm well, thank you. And you?*

*A: I'm well, thank you.*

Here, person A uses the question **How are you?** as a standard greeting. It's customary to respond, but it's not always necessary. In this case, person B decides to respond with **I'm well**. Notice that he uses the adverb **well** as a modifier for the verb **to be** (which becomes **I'm**).

This is grammatically the most correct way to respond, but as we'll see later, it's not the only way. Person B then returns the question by asking, **And you?**, to which person A gives a similar response. Let's look at the next scenario:

*A: Hey, how are you?*

*B: I'm good, thanks! You?*

*A: I'm fine. Lately, just classes and work.*

Here, person B responds to the question **How are you?** not by saying **I'm well** but by saying **I'm good**. The word **good** is an adjective and traditionally not a proper modifier for the verb **to be**. But although this may be considered grammatically incorrect, it's actually a much more common response than **I'm well**, which often sounds too stiff and formal.

Another natural-sounding alternative is to say **I'm fine**, just as person A says in the third line. Notice that you can return the question of **How are you?** in several ways:

- **How are you?**
- **And you?**
- **You?**
- **How about you?**

This next scenario is a bit more complicated:

*Friend A: Hey, I haven't seen you in forever!*

*Friend B: I know! **How have you been doing?***

*Friend A: I've been doing well, thanks. How about you?*

*Friend B: Hanging in there. Want to grab lunch sometime?*

*Friend A: Yeah, I'm down!*

First off, instead of simply asking **How are you?**, friend B asks a slightly different question: **How have you been doing?** The difference is that while **How are you?** simply asks about a current state, **How have you been doing?** asks how a person *has been doing lately*.

In other words, it's a way to catch up with the other person. In this conversation, it's an appropriate question since the two friends haven't seen each other in a long time. You can also say **How have you been?**, which means the same thing. Similarly, **How are you?** and **How are you doing?** basically mean the same thing and are both commonly used.

In response, friend A conforms with the present perfect progressive tense by saying, **I've been doing well**. Here, it actually sounds natural to use the adverb **well** because it's modifying the verb **to do**, not the verb **to be**. Friend B, on the other hand, responds to friend A's question by saying **Hanging in there**. This is a casual idiom that basically means that life has been difficult (hectic, stressful, etc.), but the person is managing to keep up.

Since **How are you?** is used as a greeting, it's common for the other person to respond in order to reciprocate the greeting, such as in this conversation at a supermarket:

*Cashier: Hi, **how are you?***

*Customer: I'm good, thank you. How are you?*

*Cashier: I'm doing well, thanks. Did you find everything alright today?*

*Cashier: Yes, thank you.*

However, as I mentioned before, it's also acceptable to *not* respond to the question, since it is such a common phrase that can mean not much more than a simple greeting. This is especially true with customers, who may not always respond to the greeting that a cashier uses with every single customer:

*Cashier: Hi, **how are you?***

*(A minute later)*

*Cashier: Your total is \$22.54.*

*Customer: (Gives the cashier his card) Here you go.*

In this conversation, the cashier's question goes unresponded, and the interaction simply continues as normal. Let's move onto the next conversation:

*Friend A: Hey man, **what's up?***

*Friend B: Not much. **How are you doing?***

*Friend A: I'm doing good. Drinks tonight?*

*Friend B: Maybe. I just have to get up early for work tomorrow.*

*Friend A: Oh, right. **How's your new job going?***

*Friend B: It's alright. I just have to get used to this new schedule.*

It's important to talk about the phrase **What's up?** and how it's different from **How are you?.** First of all, it's much more informal and often used by young

people. Second of all, it means something different and must be responded to accordingly.

While **How are you?** and similar phrases ask about a person's *state of being*, **What's up?** asks about what the person is *doing* or about what is *happening* in general. You can respond to the question by saying what you're currently doing (e.g., I'm working, just studying, etc.), but the most common response is just say **Not much**. This phrase is so common, in fact, that it has its own texting abbreviation: **nm**.

In response, friend B doesn't simply ask **How are you?** but **How are you doing?**. Once again, these two mean the same thing, but friend A's response conforms to the present progressive tense (**I'm doing good**). Although **good** is technically grammatically incorrect, since the adjective is not a proper modifier for **to do**, it still sounds natural.

In the fifth line, friend A asks a much more specific question about friend B: **How's your new job going?** We have now moved past the realm of simple greetings, and the two people are now having a more involved conversation with each other.

You may have noticed up until now that most of these responses to **How are you?** tend to be positive (**I'm fine, I'm good, I'm well, etc.**) However, though this is most customary, you certainly don't have to respond this way. Some people are more honest than others and might immediately say how they are truly feeling, rather than conforming to the standard formula of greetings. For example:

*A: How are you?*

*B: Um, not so good.*

*A: Why, what's wrong?*

On the other hand, the formula of **How are you?** followed by a positive, although ingenuine, response is so common that in order to understand one's true current state, you'll have to dig a bit deeper. Take a look at this example:

*A: How are you?*

*B: Fine, you?*

*A: I'm fine... You look a little upset. Is everything okay?*

*B: Well, not really...*

At first, person B responds to person A's question in a conventional way by saying **Fine** (these one-word answers are just as appropriate as saying **I'm fine**, etc.). However, person A can clearly tell that something is wrong and asks person B a much more genuine question: **Is everything okay?**

This question, functioning much differently from the common greeting of **How are you?**, elicits a much more honest response from person B, who confesses, "Well, not really..." Hopefully, this can show you how two questions, although they mean similar things semantically, function very differently and thus should be used differently depending on what you want from a conversation.