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# Anomalous finite forms - What Does It Mean

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**As a rule of thumb to clarify any doubt about the use of anomalous finites I give you that simple rule I've learned and created myself in my 62 years of experience on english language, not found in the iNet because english native teachers they are not aware they should give it as a rule to foreign students. Rules like this (I have plenty of them)**

Anomalous finite forms (M.C)

The term anomalous finites refers to the group of these 24 anomalous finite verbs given below:

Am, is, was  
Are, - , were  
Have, has, had  
Do, does, did  
Will, would;  
shall, should;  
can, could;  
may, might;  
must, ought,  
need, dare, used (to).

As a rule of thumb to clarify any doubt about the use of anomalous finites I give you that simple rule I've learned and created myself in my 62 years of experience on english language, not found in the iNet because english native teachers they are not aware they should give it as a rule to foreign students. Rules like this (I have plenty of them) will be missed by the students of Arenys library wich throw me away with untrue comments. How can they say I've been speaking the 90% of the class if I have been away half of the time getting the sheets printed for Mari Paz and my self? In any case I only could speak during the 90% of time I've been in the class, that is => less than a 40%..

When using an anomalous finite in past tense or third person.. the "main" verb must stay in "infinite form"

In that particular case.. if you have a doubt about the correct ortography of the sentence =>

"What does it mean?" or "What does it means?":

"does" is already in third person => the "main" verb must stay in "infinite form"

Anomalous finite forms

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The word 'anomalous' means 'irregular.' In English language their number is 24. These 24 anomalous finite verbs are a basis of English language. The peculiarity of these verbs is that while framing negative or interrogative sentences, no auxiliary verbs are needed. Another aspect is that these verbs do not have 'to infinite' or 'ing' forms.

As you can probably see, these are all auxiliary verbs. Some of them are also used as principal verbs. As auxiliaries their function is to help principal verbs to form their tenses and moods. As anomalous finites, they have other functions.

Anomalous finites are irregular. They do not form the past tense by the addition of -ed, -d or -t, but by a change in the root vowel. Some anomalous finites (must, ought) have no past tense forms at all. But these irregular finite verbs are different from other finite verbs in many respects and hence they are called anomalous finites.

#### Finite forms

In general, the verb forms that show tense and subject agreement are called "finite forms", while those that don't, are called "non-finite".

The simplest non-finite form in English is the infinitive. This comes in bare ("go") and marked ("to go") forms. Other non-finite forms include the gerund and active participle ("going") and the passive participle ("gone").

The finite forms are the past tense ("went"), the 3rd-person singular present ("goes"), and the non-3rd-singular present ("go").

The single irregular verb "to be" has an additional finite present tense forms for 1st-person singular ("am") and 2nd person (which is identical with the plural, "are").

#### Differences

The most obvious difference between anomalous finites and other finites is that they can be used with the contraction n't which is the shortened form of not.

It isn't true. (= It is not true.)

We aren't going anywhere. (= We are not going anywhere.)

You shouldn't do that.

I don't know what to do.

Of the 24 anomalous finites, the 5 forms: "be, have, do, need & dare" are sometimes used as principal verbs and sometimes as auxiliaries. The remaining are always used as auxiliaries.

#### The use of anomalous finites

##### To form negative sentences

I know him.

I don't know him. (NOT: I know not him.)

She wrote to me.

She didn't write to me. (NOT: She wrote not to me.)

Here the 2 anomalous finites "do & did" help to change positive statements into negative statements. The mere addition of not to the positive sentence is not enough in modern English.

When trying to figure out the meaning of something, it's important to pay attention to which words are being used.

Expressions like "What does that mean?" and "What does it mean?" may seem similar, but they can have very subtle differences in usage.

If you're asking "What does it mean?," and "what does that mean," it is hard to categorize and define a rule to follow because they are usually used interchangeably.

Let's look more in-depth at the differences between "what does it mean" and "what does that mean" with some example sentences. We are also going to mention other relevant expressions, such as "what does it means" and "what is that supposed to mean."

#### What Does it Mean" Vs. "What Does That Mean"

"What does it mean" and "what does that mean" can often be used interchangeably. In fact, the difference is probably so subtle that the listener probably wouldn't even notice. There are some instances when one expression may be preferred over the other, which we will give in our examples below.

What does it mean?

Here are some of the times we may choose to use "what does it mean."

We usually use "what does it mean" to:

#### Talk More Generally

Maybe we want to talk about broad, abstract topics like the universe, life, God, marriage, society, feelings, and so forth. For these big ideas, it would be better to use "what does it mean" here.

For example:

What does it mean to be happy?

What does it mean to be successful?

What does it mean to be in love?

What does it mean to be a good person?

What does it all mean?! (referring to life and the universe in general)

#### When We Want to Know The Definition of Something

If you want to know what a word or phrase means, the expression "what does it mean" is probably your best bet.

For example:

What does "serendipity" mean? What does it mean?

I don't understand what "irony" means. What does it mean?

What does the phrase "to pull someone's leg" mean? What does it mean?

When you ask "what does it mean" here, you are looking for a definition of the word.

What does that mean?

Here are some of the times we may choose to use "what does that mean."

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We use “what does that mean” to:

Ask for clarification

If someone says something and you want them to be more clear, you can ask, “what does that mean?”

For example:

“I’m sorry, I don’t understand what you just said. What does that mean?”

“I can’t follow what you said. I’m confused. What does that mean?”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about. What does that mean?”

Asking for further explanation

This is similar to the point above, but we use “what does that mean” when we want somebody to explain something to us in more detail.

For example:

“Can you explain what that word means? What does that mean?”

“What do you mean by “success”? What does that mean to you?”

“The tests show that some scar tissue has formed.” – “What does that mean?”

“The building just burned down. What does that mean for the company?”

“The kid just failed high school. What does that mean for his future?”

“Covid has just started. What does that mean for our country?”

In these cases, we are not just looking for a word’s definition. We want somebody to explain the concept to us in more detail.

What does it mean?

“What does it mean” is incorrect grammar. When asking a question, we must write “mean,” as in, “what does it mean?” If you are answering the question, you could say, “it means...”

For example, “what does irony mean?” — “it means the opposite of what is expected.”

What is that supposed to mean?

The expression “what is that supposed to mean” (often spoken in a frustrated tone) is said if we think someone is not telling us the full story or they are telling us something indirectly.

For example:

“Maria said she was ‘busy,’ but what is that supposed to mean?”

The person here believes that Angela is not telling the full story and wants to know what she really means. What is she busy doing? Is she really that busy? Maybe if Angela is a love interest, they are wondering if she is actually busy or if she is just avoiding the date.

“The dress looks too tight on you.” — “What is that supposed to mean? Are you calling me fat?”

In the example above, the person is angry because they think their friend is calling them fat indirectly.

“Why don’t they just come out and say it? What is that supposed to mean?”

Again, the person is frustrated because they think the speaker is not being direct. They want to know what the speaker really means

Summary

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Now that we've looked at some examples of "what does it mean" and "what does that mean," let's summarize the main differences between these two expressions.

"What does it mean" is used to talk about more general, abstract topics. It can also be used when you want to know the definition of something.

"What does that mean" is used when you want somebody to explain something to you in more detail or if you want clarification on something that was said.

If you are offended by a remark made by someone and want to know what they truly mean, you can say, "what is that supposed to mean?"

Finally, remember that "what does it means" is incorrect grammar. The correct form is "what does it mean?"

#### In Conclusion

As a native English speaker, this is my opinion on the matter. I hope I have been able to answer your questions. Leave a comment below if you found it helpful and be sure to share this with your friends and family!

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I'm an Irish tutor and founder of TPR Teaching. I started teaching in 2016 and have since taught in the UK, Spain, and online. I love learning new things about the English language and how to teach it better. I'm always trying to improve my knowledge, so I can better meet the needs of others! I enjoy traveling, nature walks, and soaking up a new culture. Please share the posts if you find them helpful!