In English we are always asking questions or requesting information. We may ask for something to be done for us, or desire information about something. We can ‘ask for’ either. In Spanish people ask for things just as often. But in Spanish there are two verbs often used to ask questions. The verb Peguntar is used to ask for information. Pedir is used to ask for something to be done or to order something.

The same kind situation exists at least two other times in Spanish. For example, the verbs S er
and
Estar
mean ‘to be’. In general,
Ser
is used to state things that are permanent.
Estar
is used to state the condition or location of something. Then there are
Conocer
and Saber, ‘to know’.
Conocer
is used for knowing people, meeting for the first time, or being familiar with places. Saber is used to state knowledge of facts. If you would like to review these verbs take a look at the previous articles “To Be or Not To Be” and “I Know I Know You”.

Let’s start with
Preguntar
, to ask for information.
Preguntar
is a regular verb. Its conjugation in all tenses follows the same pattern as other regular verbs, but you still may want to consult your favorite verb conjugation reference. There are plenty of them on-line.

Also,
Preguntar
is often used with an indirect object pronoun (me,
te
, le, les, nos), that indicates TO where the question is going, or FOR whom the question is intended. You were introduced to indirect object pronouns in the
Gustar
articles.

Take a look at some examples of when
preguntar
is used:

I am going to ask (to) my Dad where he was. –
Voy
a
preguntar
(le) a
mí
papa
dónde
estaba
.

Can I ask (to) you this.. –
Puedo
preguntar
(le)
esto
..

She asked (to) him about that yesterday. – Ella le
preguntó
sobre
eso
ayer
.

Do you want to ask a question? - ¿
Quiere
hacer
una
pregunta
?

They were asking many questions. –
Hacían
muchas
preguntas
*. *

We ask (to) her how to do it, (or how is it done). – Le preguntamos como se hace .

We should ask for directions to Panamá City. – Debemos preguntar como se puede llegar a Panamá . (how does one arrive to Panamá).

Ask (to) her how long she has been here. – Pregúnta (le) cuanto tiempo hace que ha estado aquí .

Also, Preguntar is sometimes used with the preposition por . If you want to ask for, or about someone or something, or ask a question on someone's behalf, you can use preguntar por :

She should ask (to) them about her car because it has not arrived yet. –
Debe
preguntar
(les)
por
su
carro
porque
no ha
llegado
todavía
.

I want to ask a question for (on behalf of)
Jamuna
. –
Quiero
hacer
una
pregunta
por
Jamuna
.

Now lets look at
Pedir
, to ask for something to be done, or to order something.
Pedir
is not a regular verb. But it is not an irregular verb either.
Pedir
has some differences to regular verb patterns, but only in a few cases. Do review the conjugations of
Pedir
in your Spanish verb reference.
Pedir
in some cases will also use an indirect object pronoun.

He is asking too much money for the house. –
Pide
demasiado

dinero
por
la casa.

I want to order eggs for breakfast. –
Quiero
pedir
huevos
para
el
desayuno
.

Where is my order? – ¿
Dónde
está
mí
pedido
?

I always ask (to) her to wash the dishes. –
Siempre
le
pido
que
lave los
platos
. (subjunctive).

She already ordered lunch. –
Ya
pedió
almuerzo
.

We asked (to) the bank for a loan. – Le
pedimos
al
banco
un
préstamo
.

When I ask (to) her to clean, she does it well. –
Cuando
le

pido
que
limpie
,
ella
lo
hace
bien
.

Keep in mind that
Pedir
means to ask for. The ‘for’ is already included in
Pedir
.

I already asked for it. –
Ya
lo
pedí
.

Of course, sometimes when asking for something,
Preguntar
and
Pedir
are not used. It just depends on the context of the sentence. For example, ¿
Puede
hacerme
un favor? Can you do me a favor? Or ¿
Donde
está
María
? Where is
María
? Asking for a favor is a request for something to be done. Asking where Maria is, is a request for information. But when sentences arise like the above examples calling for
Preguntar
or
Pedir

, you need to know which one to use.

If you are living in or visiting a Spanish speaking country, the importance of being able to ask for something or being able to request information is obvious. Knowing the difference between
Preguntar
and
Pedir
will allow you to Ask for information, or for something to be done (and hopefully you will Receive it), like a true Spanish speaker. Lucky for us it is a pretty straightforward concept.

Hope this helps! Fred