

An Introduction to Complex Syntactic Structures

1. Noun Clause

- ✓ A **noun clause** is a dependent clause which takes the place of a noun in another clause or **phrase**.
- ✓ Like a noun, a noun clause acts as the **subject** or **object** of a **verb** or the object of a **preposition**, answering the questions "who(m)?" or "what?".
- ✓ It performs a **nominal function**. Noun clauses perform nine grammatical functions in English grammar

2. Words that introduce noun clauses:

How What where Which Whoever If Whatever Whichever whoever Whomever That When Whether who, which Why

Noun clauses with Wh-words are indirect questions. They have statement word order, even when they occur within questions

[**Wh + subject + verb**]

Examples:

I don't know **what he is doing**.

I wonder **how he feels today**.

Where I put my book is a mystery

2. Functions of noun clause

Noun clauses can be used as the following:

1. Subject:

A noun clause that functions as a subject does exactly what subjects do. It tells what the sentence is about. It gives an idea about who or what did the action in a sentence.

- *Whoever ate my lunch* is in big trouble.
- *How you will finish all your homework on time* is beyond me.
- *That the museum cancelled the lecture* disappoints me.

2. Direct object:

The second grammatical function that noun clauses perform is the direct object. A direct object is a word, phrase, or clause that follows a transitive verb and answers the question "who?" or "what?" receives the action of the verb. For example, the following italicized noun clauses function as direct objects:

- The counselor has been wondering *if she chose the right career*.
- Do you know *when the train should arrive?*
- Our dog eats *whatever we put in his bowl*.

3. Indirect object:

The third grammatical function that noun clauses perform is the indirect object. An indirect object is a word, phrase, or clause that indicates to or for whom or what the action of an intransitive verb is performed. For example, the following italicized noun clauses function as indirect objects:

The judge will give *what you said* some deliberation during her decision.

The group has given *that most Americans do not support their cause* little consideration.

My parents gave that my brother wants his own car much thought.

4. Object of a preposition:

The fourth grammatical function that noun clauses perform is the object of preposition. Noun clauses that function as object of prepositions come after a preposition in a sentence.

Don't always listen to **what people say**

5. Subject complement:

The fifth grammatical function that noun clauses perform is the subject complement. A subject complement is a word, phrase, or clause that **follows a copular, or linking verb and describes the subject of a clause**. The terms *predicate nominative* and *predicate noun* are also used for noun clauses that function as subject complements. For example, the following italicized noun clauses function as subject complements:

- The truth was *that the moving company lost all your furniture*.
- My question is *whether you will sue the company for losses*.
- The first place winner will be *whoever swims the farthest in an hour*.
- *That is what I plan to do*.

6. Noun clause functioning as an object of a participle:

a noun clause can also act as an object of a participle in a sentence. It usually comes after a participle.

I am pleased **that you have dealt with the problem in this way**.

7. Noun clause functioning as an object of a gerund:

a noun clause can function as an object of gerund. A noun clause functioning as an object of gerund usually follows a gerund and receives its action.

Thinking **that you have failed the test** changed my mind about you.

8. Noun Clause functioning as Objects of Infinitive:

A noun clause functioning as an object of infinitive receives the action of an infinitive.

They have to know **that you have transferred to another**

Practice

Exercise 01:

Parenthesize each noun clause in the following sentences. Decide whether it is used as a subject, a direct object, an indirect object, an object of a preposition, or a predicate nominative?

1. You know that the telephone uses electricity.
2. What you say into a phone creates sound waves.
3. An electric current carries the sound to whoever is listening.
4. Basically, this is how a telephone operates.
5. You can talk to whomever you like and say whatever you think.
6. Campaign workers use whatever helps them.
7. That telephones can be very helpful has been shown in many elections.
8. Who will win the election is what people want to know.
9. Telephoners ask whoever answers a series of questions.
10. Whether a candidate is popular is a vital matter.
11. Another question may be what the major issues are.
12. Voters usually give whoever is calling an answer.
13. The king ordered that the traitor should be put to death.
14. He said that he would not go.
15. That he is not interested in the offer is known to us.
16. He said that he was not feeling well.
17. I cannot rely on what he says.
18. I don't know where he has gone.

Exercise 02

Complete the sentences by changing the questions to noun clauses:

1. Who is she? I don't know.....
2. Who are they? I don't know.....
3. What is that? Do you know.....
4. What are those? I don't know.....
5. Whose book is that? I don't know.....
6. Whose books are those? I don't know.....
7. What is a wrench? Do you know
8. Who is that woman? I wonder.....
9. Whose house is that? I wonder.....
10. What is a clause? Don't you know
11. What is in that drawer? I don't know.....
12. What is on TV tonight? I wonder.....
13. Whose glasses are those? Could you tell me.....
14. Who am I? He doesn't know.....
15. What's at the end of the rainbow? The little girl wants to know.....

Excercise 03

Complete the sentences by changing the questions to noun clauses.

1. Who(m) did you see at the party? Tell me.....
2. Who came to the party? Tell me
3. Who did Helen talk to? Do you know
4. Who lives at that apartment? Do you know.....
5. What happened? Tell me.....
6. What did he say? Tell me.....
7. What kind of car does Jim have? I can't remember
8. How old are their children? I can't even remember.....
9. Where can I catch the bus? Could you please tell me.....
10. Who broke the window? Do you know.....
11. Who did Sara invite? I don't know.....
12. How long has Ted been living here? Do you know.....
13. What time is flight 677 supposed to arrive? Can you tell me.....
14. Why is Yoko angry? Do you know.....

Exercise 04

A noun clause is a type of subordinate clause; it has a subject and verb but cannot stand alone as an independent sentence. A noun clause functions the same way a noun does: as a subject; as a direct object; as an indirect object; etc. Some noun clauses begin with words such as *that, what, why*, or other words that start with *wh-*.

Example: She didn't hear what I was saying.

In the example, *what I was saying* is the noun clause. It is functioning as a direct object. Underline the noun clause in each sentence below. In the blank write how it is functioning in the sentence.

1. The students were in trouble for what they did in the hall.

2. What my brother enjoys most is playing soccer.

3. She explained why she couldn't come to the party.

4. Mrs. Scott assigned whoever was late extra homework.

5. Whoever first ate oysters was very brave.

6. The speaker told about where he went on his vacation.

7. The team knew that they would follow the coach's instructions.
