

Noun Clauses as Subjects & Objects

B1

Grammar Reference

A **noun clause** is a group of words with its own subject and verb that functions as a noun — as the **subject** or **object** of the main sentence.

✓ ***What she announced** surprised everyone.* (noun clause as subject)

✓ *I didn't know **what the answer was**.* (noun clause as object)

Type	Introduced by	Use	Examples
Wh- clause	what, who, where, when, why, how	indirect question	What he said shocked me. / I don't know where she lives.
That-clause	that (often omitted)	reported thought/fact	I think (that) you are right. / That she resigned surprised us.
The fact that ...	the fact that	emphasise a fact as subject	The fact that he lied annoyed everyone.
Whether/if clause	whether / if	indirect yes/no question	I wonder whether she knows. / I don't know if it's true.

Word order inside the noun clause — always use statement order

wh-word + subject + verb (NOT wh-word + auxiliary + subject)

✓ *I don't know where **she lives**.* | ✗ *I don't know where **does she live**.*

✓ *Can you tell me what time **it is**?* | ✗ *Can you tell me what **is the time**?*

■ **Key rule:** No inversion inside noun clauses — even when the main sentence is a question. Always: subject before verb.

■ **"It" as dummy subject:** *That she passed was surprising.* → *It was surprising **that she passed**.* Both are correct; the "it" structure is more common in formal English.

Exercise 1: Word Order

Put the words in the correct order to build the sentence containing a noun clause.

Question 1

said . What shocked me he

Answer: What he said shocked me.

Question 2

know she lives where I . don't

Answer: I don't know where she lives.

Question 3

annoyed late . he that The arrived everyone fact

Answer: The fact that he arrived late annoyed everyone.

Question 4

she . It surprising passed that was

Answer: It was surprising that she passed.

Question 5

I don't it . is whether true know

Answer: I don't know whether it is true.

Question 6

knew Nobody . happened what

Answer: Nobody knew what happened.

Question 7

That . he the got obvious job was

Answer: That he got the job was obvious.

Question 8

the is me you ? Can tell meeting when

Answer: Can you tell me when the meeting is?

Exercise 2: Sentence Builder

Circle the sentence with the correct noun clause structure.

Question 1

Which sentence has the correct noun clause word order?

- a) I don't know where does she live.
- b) I don't know where she lives. ✓**
- c) I don't know where lives she.

Question 2

Choose the correct sentence:

- a) What did he say shocked everyone.
- b) What he said shocked everyone. ✓**
- c) What he said shocks to everyone.

Question 3

Which is correct?

- a) Can you tell me what is the time?
- b) Can you tell me what the time is? ✓**
- c) Can you tell me what time does it is?

Question 4

Choose the correct sentence:

- a) The fact that she resigned surprised us. ✓**
- b) The fact that she resigned it surprised us.
- c) The fact which she resigned surprised us.

Question 5

Which sentence is correct?

- a) I wonder whether he knows the answer. ✓**
- b) I wonder whether does he know the answer.
- c) I wonder whether he know the answer.

Question 6

Choose the correct noun clause as subject:

- a) That he failed the exam was disappointed.
- b) That he failed the exam was disappointing. ✓
- c) That he failed the exam it was disappointing.

Question 7

Which is correct?

- a) Nobody knows how did they escape.
- b) Nobody knows how they escaped. ✓
- c) Nobody knows how they did escape.

Question 8

Choose the correct sentence:

- a) It is obvious that she is lying. ✓
- b) It is obvious which she is lying.
- c) It is obvious what she is lying.

Exercise 3: Error Correction

Each sentence has one wrong word. Circle it and write the correction.

Question 1

I don't know where ~~does~~ she live. → **remove "does" — use statement order: where she lives**

Question 2

What he said ~~it~~ shocked everyone. → **remove "it" — "What he said" is already the subject**

Question 3

The fact ~~which~~ she resigned surprised us. → **"which" → "that": the fact that**

Question 4

Can you tell me what ~~is~~ the time? → **move "is" after "time": what the time is**

Question 5

Nobody knows how ~~did~~ they escape. → **remove "did" — statement order: how they escaped**

Question 6

It is obvious ~~which~~ she is telling the truth. → **"which" → "that": It is obvious that ...**

Question 7

That she passed was very ~~surprised~~. → **"surprised" → "surprising": adjective form needed**

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

Choose the correct word to introduce the noun clause.

Question 1

I don't know why she decided to leave.

Question 2

The fact that he lied was the most upsetting part.

Question 3

Can you tell me when the next train leaves?

Question 4

It is clear that more funding is needed.

Question 5

Whether she knew about the problem remains unclear.

Question 6

I wonder how he managed to finish so quickly.

Question 7

What they found the solution surprised the experts.

Question 8

Nobody could explain why the accident happened.

Exercise 5: Matching

Match each sentence beginning (1–8) with the correct noun clause ending (a–h).

Sentence beginning	Ending
1. What she announced → a	a) how this machine works?
2. I don't understand → b	b) boosted the whole team's confidence.
3. The fact that they won → c	c) suggested he had something to hide.
4. It is well known → d	d) where the documents were hidden.
5. Nobody knows → e	e) came as a complete surprise.
6. I wonder → f	f) why he reacted so badly.
7. That he refused to comment → g	g) that she is an excellent surgeon.
8. Can you explain → h	h) whether the results will be published soon.

Key: 1 → a 2 → b 3 → c 4 → d 5 → e 6 → f 7 → g 8 → h

Exercise 6: Sentence Sort

Write **S** (noun clause as Subject) or **O** (noun clause as Object) next to each sentence.

1. She knew exactly what she wanted. [**O**]
2. What he said shocked the whole committee. [**S**]
3. I wonder whether the report has been published. [**O**]
4. He explained that he had made a mistake. [**O**]
5. Whether she attends is entirely up to her. [**S**]
6. That the company went bankrupt surprised nobody. [**S**]
7. The fact that they lied angered the public. [**S**]
8. How they solved the problem remains a mystery. [**S**]
9. I don't understand why she left so suddenly. [**O**]

10. Nobody could tell me when the results would arrive. [O]

Exercise 7: Spot the Extra Word

One word in each sentence does not belong. Circle it and write it on the line.

Question 1

I don't know where **does** she live . → extra word: **does**

Question 2

What he said **it** shocked everyone . → extra word: **it**

Question 3

The fact **which** that she resigned surprised us . → extra word: **which**

Question 4

It is obvious that she is telling the truth **it** . → extra word: **it**

Question 5

Nobody knows how **did** they managed to escape . → extra word: **did**

Question 6

That she passed was very **much** surprising . → extra word: **much**

Question 7

Can you tell me what is the **time** is ? → extra word: **is (first one)**

ANSWER KEY — DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS

Exercise 1: Word Order

1. What he said shocked me.
2. I don't know where she lives.
3. The fact that he arrived late annoyed everyone.
4. It was surprising that she passed.
5. I don't know whether it is true.
6. Nobody knew what happened.
7. That he got the job was obvious.
8. Can you tell me when the meeting is?

Exercise 2: Sentence Builder

1. b) I don't know where she lives.
2. b) What he said shocked everyone.
3. b) Can you tell me what the time is?
4. a) The fact that she resigned surprised us.
5. a) I wonder whether he knows the answer.
6. b) That he failed the exam was disappointing.
7. b) Nobody knows how they escaped.
8. a) It is obvious that she is lying.

Exercise 3: Error Correction

1. does → remove: statement order — where she lives
2. it → remove: "What he said" is already the subject
3. which → "that": the fact that
4. is → move after "time": what the time is
5. did → remove: statement order — how they escaped
6. which → "that": It is obvious that ...
7. surprised → "surprising": adjective form needed

Exercise 4: Gap Fill

1. why
2. The fact that
3. when
4. that
5. Whether
6. how
7. What
8. why

Exercise 6: Sentence Sort

1. What he said shocked the whole committee. [S]
2. I don't understand why she left so suddenly. [O]
3. That the company went bankrupt surprised nobody. [S]
4. She knew exactly what she wanted. [O]
5. The fact that they lied angered the public. [S]
6. I wonder whether the report has been published. [O]
7. How they solved the problem remains a mystery. [S]
8. He explained that he had made a mistake. [O]
9. Whether she attends is entirely up to her. [S]
10. Nobody could tell me when the results would arrive. [O]

Exercise 7: Extra Word

1. does
2. it
3. which
4. it
5. did
6. much
7. is (first one)