



The Writing Center

DLA: Noun Clauses

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Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Learning Outcomes

Through independent work, you will be able to define a noun clause, identify noun clauses in sentences, and use noun clauses appropriately in written work.

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Understanding Noun Clauses

A noun clause is a group of related words with a subject and a verb, and it serves the same functions as a noun can in sentences: it can be a subject, object, or complement. Noun clauses are also used for indirect (also called embedded) questions and reported speech.

These examples show the different ways that noun clauses can be used in sentences.

Noun Clause as Subject

In this sentence, the subject is “the student”: ***The student*** will pass the class.

A noun clause can be the subject: ***Whoever passes the final*** will pass the class.

Noun Clause as Object of a Verb

In this sentence, the object of the verb is “the truth”: I know ***the truth***.

A noun clause can be the object of a verb: I know ***who took the money***.

Noun Clauses as Object of a Preposition

In this sentence, “the winner” is the object of the preposition “for”: The prize is for ***the winner***.

A noun clause can be the object of a preposition: The prize is for ***whoever comes in first place***.

Noun Clause as Subject Complement

In this sentence, “his honesty” is a subject complement (a word that modifies or describes the subject): His best quality is ***his honesty***.

The subject complement can be replaced by a noun clause: His best quality is ***that he never lies***.

Noun Clause as an Adjective Complement

Noun clauses can also follow certain adjectives. Here are some examples:

- The students were happy ***that they all passed the exam***.
- It's true ***that his parents are Olympic athletes***.

Noun Clauses with That

Noun clauses beginning with *that* can follow verbs and adjectives. They are rarely used as subjects. You can choose to omit the word *that*, but it is generally used in more formal, academic writing.

Verbs Followed by That-Clauses

The following chart shows some verbs that can be followed by noun clauses beginning with *that*:

agree	know	say	think
believe	read	tell	understand

Examples

- Mrs. Knight knew ***that the students had questions***.
- I understand ***that the professor does not accept late work***.

Adjectives Followed by That-Clauses

The following chart shows some adjectives that can be followed by noun clauses beginning with *that*:

aware	confident	proud	surprised
certain	happy	sure	worried

Examples

- Larry was confident ***that he had aced the exam***.
- My parents are proud ***that I graduated from college***.

It Is Statements with That-Clauses

Another pattern with adjectives and *that*-clauses are sentences that begin with “It is” followed by an adjective and a *that*-clause. The following chart lists some of these adjectives:

clear	important	obvious	true
good	interesting	possible	well known

Examples

- It is important ***that you pass all of your classes this semester***.
- It is surprising ***that the weather has been so pleasant this week***.

Noun Clauses with Question Words

Noun clauses that begin with a *wh*-question word, *whether*, or *if* are also called indirect or embedded questions. This type of noun clause is a good alternative to direct questions, which are generally inappropriate in academic writing.

Noun Clauses Beginning with Wh-Question Words

The following chart shows the difference between a direct *wh*-question and a noun clause with an indirect *wh*-question.

Direct <i>Wh</i> -Question	Noun Clause with an Indirect <i>Wh</i> -Question
Who is the author?	I can't tell who the author is .
What did the professor say?	The students didn't hear what the professor said .
Where is the computer lab?	She doesn't know where the computer lab is .
When did they graduate?	I wonder when they graduated .
Why is the sky blue?	My daughter doesn't know why the sky is blue .
How are your parents doing?	Mitch asked how your parents are doing .

Grammar of Noun Clauses with Indirect *Wh*-Questions

Notice that the word order of indirect *wh*-questions follows statement order, not question order. The auxiliary verb *do* is not used in indirect *wh*-questions.

- I don't know **where the reference books are**. NOT I don't know **where are the reference books**.
- He explained **how the moon affects tides**. NOT He explained **how does the moon affect tides**. Indirect *wh*-questions can also be in subject position.
- **What he did** was amazing.
- **How they acted** impressed me.

Noun Clauses Beginning with Whether/If

The following chart shows the difference between a direct *yes/no* question and a noun clause with *whether* or *if* to form an indirect *yes/no* question.

Direct Yes/No Question	Noun Clause with an Indirect Yes/No Question
Are you ready?	Let me know if you're ready .
Did she go to class?	I wonder whether she went to class .

Grammar of Noun Clauses with Indirect Yes/No Questions

As with indirect *wh*-questions, the word order of indirect *yes/no* questions follows statement word order, and the auxiliary *do* is not used. Also observe the ways in which *not* can be included:

- He wonders **whether** he passed the test **or not**.
- He wonders **if** he passed the test **or not**.
- We don't know **whether or not** we can attend the meeting.
- **NOT** We don't know **if or not** we can attend the meeting.

If the noun clause begins with *whether*, it can be the subject of a sentence.

- **Whether he believes me or not** doesn't matter to me.

Noun Clauses for Reported Speech and Writing

An important use of noun clauses is for reported speech and writing. Look at the differences between quoted speech and reported speech below.

Quoted	Reported
She said, " I am working on Sunday. "	She said that she was working on Sunday.
She said, " I did my homework. "	She said that she had done her homework.
She said, " I will be at the party. "	She said that she would be at the party.

Backshifting

Notice in the examples above that the verb tense used in quoted speech changes tense in the noun clause used for reported speech. This rule is called **backshifting**. It may or may not be necessary to change the verb tense in the noun clause, depending on the context.

*Note that in all of the examples below, the word **that** is optional but commonly used in writing.

Reporting Verb: Present and Future Tenses

When using a reporting verb in present or future tense, the verb in the noun clause does not backshift. In the chart below, the tense of the reporting verb is indicated in parenthesis.

Original Sentence	Reported Speech
" I am traveling to Italy."	She says that she is traveling to Italy. (<i>simple present</i>) She has said that she is traveling to Italy. (<i>present perfect</i>) She will say that she is traveling to Italy. (<i>simple future</i>)

Reporting Verb: Past Tense

In the chart below, the reporting verb **said** is in the simple past tense, which means the verb in the noun clause will usually **backshift** and be in a past tense form.

Original Sentence	Reported Speech
“I finish my work every night.” (<i>simple present</i>)	She said that she finished her work every night. (<i>simple past</i>)
“I am finishing the work tomorrow.” (<i>present progressive</i>)	She said she was finishing the work tomorrow. (<i>past progressive</i>)
“I finished the work yesterday.” (<i>simple past</i>)	She said that she finished the work yesterday. (<i>simple past – no change</i>) She said that she had finished the work yesterday. (<i>past perfect</i>)
“I have already finished the work.” (<i>present perfect</i>)	She said that she had already finished the work. (<i>past perfect</i>)
“I had finished the work earlier.” (<i>past perfect</i>)	She said that she had finished the work earlier. (<i>past perfect – no backshifting possible</i>)

If the reported speech is a fact or general truth, do not change the verb tense to a past form.

Original Sentence	Reported Speech
“Water boils at 0° Celsius.”	She said that water boils at 0° Celsius.

Modal Verbs

When the following modal and phrasal modal verbs are used in quoted speech and the reporting verb is in the past tense, change them in reported speech as follows:

Original Sentence	Reported Speech
“Students can go to the Writing Center”	He said that students could go to the Writing Center.
“Students must go to the Writing Center.”	He said that students had to go to the Writing Center.
“Students have to go to the Writing Center.”	
“Students will go to the Writing Center.”	He said that students would go to the Writing Center.
“Students are going to go to the Writing Center.”	He said that students were going to go to the Writing Center.

Original Sentence	Reported Speech
“Students should go to the Writing Center”	He said that students should go to the Writing Center.
“Students ought to go to the Writing Center.”	He said that students ought to go to the Writing Center.
“Students might go to the Writing Center.”	He said that students might go to the Writing Center.
“Students may go to the Writing Center.”	He said that students may go to the Writing Center.

The Subjunctive in Noun Clauses

The subjunctive mood is used after main clause verbs that express urgency or advice. In the sentences below the noun clause is **bolded** and the subjunctive verb is outlined.

A subjunctive verb is always in base or simple form. Do not add any tense, and do not change the verb to agree with the person and number of the subject.

- The scientist insisted **that his laboratory** be clean.
- She demanded **that her daughter** study every day.

When making a subjunctive verb negative, simply add the word *not* in front of the verb. Do not use the auxiliary verb *do*.

- He requested **that students** not use their phone in class.

When using a subjunctive verb in passive voice, use the base form of *be* plus the past participle of the main verb.

- It is vital **that teachers** be trained in classroom safety.

Below is a chart of common verbs and expressions that take the subjunctive form in the noun clause that follows:

ask (that)	insist (that)	suggest (that)	it is important (that)
demand (that)	recommend (that)	it is essential (that)	it is necessary (that)

Examples

- I suggest **that he** see a specialist.
- It is essential **that children** not miss school.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

1. Noun Clauses Review

Write your answers to the questions below.

1. What is a noun clause?

2. When do you use subjunctive in noun clauses?

3. What are two differences between a direct question and a noun clause that begins with a question word?

2. Online Quiz

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/nounclausesdla> and take the DLA quiz. You must score at least 75% on the quiz before meeting with a specialist. After you complete the task, please take a screenshot of the page that has your score and show it to your specialist. Do not exit the quiz until you take the screenshot.

Choose 3a or 3b Below **3a. Identify Noun Clauses in Your Own Writing**

Look at some of your past writing assignments and find eight examples of noun clauses. Be ready to explain what kind of noun clauses you used. Correct any errors that you may have made.

3b. Noun Clause Practice

Create sentences with noun clauses by according to the directions below. Write on the topic of *travel*.

1. A noun clause as the subject.

2. A noun clause as the object of the verb.

3. A noun clause that uses a *wh*-question word.

4. A noun clause that uses *whether* or *if*.

5. A noun clause for reported speech.

6. A noun clause that uses subjunctive.

4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

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