A **noun clause** is a dependent clause that functions as a noun. A noun clause is often part of an independent clause, where it can be a subject or an object.

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>OBJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What the newspaper reported</td>
<td>was incorrect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People once believed</td>
<td>that the world was flat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

A noun clause can also follow certain adjectives and nouns.

- **Adjective**
  
  We were happy **that the semester was over**.

- **Noun**
  
  Who first challenged the belief **that the world was flat**?
There are three kinds of noun clauses:

1. *that* clauses, which begin with the word *that*
2. *if/whether* clauses, which begin with the words *whether* or *if*
3. question clauses, which begin with a question word, such as *who, what, where, when, or how*

We will study each kind in this chapter.

**Punctuating Noun Clauses**

1. NEVER use a comma to separate a noun clause from the main clause.
   
   I am sure that the address is correct.

2. If the independent clause is a statement, put a period at the end of the entire sentence. If the independent clause is a question, put a question mark at the end of the entire sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Clause</th>
<th>Noun Clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am sure</td>
<td>that the address is correct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you sure</td>
<td>that the address is correct?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**That Clauses**

A *that* clause is a dependent noun clause that begins with the word *that*.

The young filmmaker hopes *that* his film will be a financial success.

You can sometimes omit *that* if the meaning is clear without it. However, you can never omit *that* when it is the first word in a sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>The young filmmaker hopes that his film will be a financial success.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>The young filmmaker hopes his film will be a financial success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>That his film is a critical success is beyond doubt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorrect</td>
<td>His film is a critical success is beyond doubt.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A *that* clause can appear in different locations.

1. **After the independent clause verb.** The most common position of a noun clause is after the verb of the independent clause, where it functions as the object of that verb.

   ![Diagram]

   The catalog states that science courses require a laboratory period.
2. **After certain adjectives.** A *that* clause can also follow certain adjectives such as happy, glad, proud, pleased, sad, upset, worried, sorry, certain, surprised, and sure. These adjectives describe emotions.

```
  INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
   ADJECTIVE
   NOUN CLAUSE
```

The class was surprised that the instructor canceled the final exam.

3. **After certain nouns.** A *that* clause can follow certain nouns such as idea, theory, thought, claim, assertion, statement, belief, notion, and opinion.

```
  INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
       NOUN CLAUSE
       NOUN
```

No one believed Galileo's theory that Earth revolves around the sun.

4. **At the beginning of a sentence.** A *that* clause at the beginning of a sentence functions as the subject of the independent clause verb.

```
  INDEPENDENT CLAUSE
  NOUN CLAUSE (SUBJECT)
      V
```

That Earth is getting warmer is certain.

---

**Sentences Beginning with *It***

Starting a sentence with a noun clause seems awkward to many English speakers, so they often rewrite such sentences by putting *it* at the beginning and moving the noun clause to the end.

**AWKWARD**

That Earth is getting warmer is certain.

**BETTER**

It is certain that Earth is getting warmer.

In addition, the verb following *it* (except be or any intransitive verb like seem or appear) is often written in the passive voice, especially in academic writing.

- It is believed that carbon dioxide is responsible for global warming.
- It was agreed that the meeting would be postponed until next week.
- It has been proven that the world's deserts are expanding.

You can also write these sentences in the active voice:

- Many scientists believe that carbon dioxide is responsible for global warming.
- The participants agreed that the meeting would be postponed until next week.
- Measurements have proven that the world's deserts are expanding.

**Note:** In general, English writers prefer the active voice because it is more direct. However, they prefer the passive voice in five specific situations.

1. You want to emphasize what happened, not who did it.
   
   Jack was promoted last month.

2. The performer of the action is unknown.
   
   The wheel was invented during the Bronze Age.
3. The performer of the action is unimportant.
   Smoking is prohibited on airplanes.

4. You want to be objective, such as in a scientific or technical report.
   With a dropper, 3 ml of HCl were added to the test tube and heated to 37°C.

5. You want to be diplomatic; that is, you don’t want to say who did
   something wrong or made an error.
   I believe a mistake has been made on our bill.

**PRACTICE 1**

That Clauses 1

A. Complete each sentence with a *that* clause. The first one has been done for
   you as an example.

1. A comparison of the size of glaciers and icebergs over the past hundred
   years reveals that they are shrinking in size.

2. Scientists believe ____________________________________________

3. Environmentalists warn _________________________________________

4. People living near seacoasts and on low-lying islands are worried ________
   _____________________________________________________________

5. ____________________________________________________________ has been proven.

6. The idea ___________________________________________________ is nonsense.

7. Our teacher was very proud ____________________________________

B. Write each sentence so that it begins with *it* and ends with a *that* clause. The
   first one has been done for you as an example.

1. That air temperatures are rising is significant.
   *It is significant that air temperatures are rising.*

2. That ocean levels are rising is undeniable.
   ________________________________________________________________

3. That burning fossil fuels is a cause of global warming has been well
documented.
   ________________________________________________________________

4. Rewrite sentence 5 from Part A.
   ________________________________________________________________
Special Verb Tenses in That Clauses

Reported Speech

One of the most common uses of noun clauses in academic writing is to report what someone else has said or written. This kind of noun clause is called *reported speech, indirect speech,* or *indirect quotation.* Verb tenses in reported speech follow special rules.

- If the main clause verb is simple present, present perfect, or future, the verb in the noun clause is in the tense that expresses the meaning that the main clause intends.

  The prime ministers *agree* that global warming *is* a serious world problem.
  They *hope* that all nations *will be* responsible for solving this problem.
  Scientists *report* that atmospheric warming *has already begun.*
  Measurements *have indicated* that the average temperature of Earth *has risen* in the past hundred years.
  Further research *will prove* that carbon dioxide *is largely responsible.*

- If the main clause verb is in past tense, the verb in the noun clause is usually in a past form.

  The prime ministers *agreed* that global warming *was* a serious world problem.
  They *hoped* that all nations *would be* responsible for finding a solution.
  An international group of scientists *reported* that Earth's temperature *had risen* 1.1°F (0.6°C) in the last century.
  Their report *stated* that carbon dioxide *was largely responsible.*

*Exception:* The verb in the noun clause stays in the present tense when it reports a fact or a general truth:

  Researchers in the field *verified* that icebergs and glaciers *are melting.*

For more examples and practice, refer also to Indirect Quotations and Sequence of Tenses Rules in Chapter 3, page 48.

**PRACTICE 2**

*That Clauses II*

**Step 1** Read the following article.

**Step 2** Write sentences containing *that* clauses. Use the prompts and information from the article to form your sentences.

- When the prompt begins with *it,* use the passive voice in the independent clause.
- Use an appropriate verb tense in both clauses.

The first two have been done for you as examples.
Who Are Smarter—Men or Women?

Neither sex is more intelligent than the other; their brains are just different. For example, a certain area of the brain controls language, and women have more brain cells in that area than men do. Therefore, women learn language more easily than men do. However, women's superior language skills certainly do not mean that women are more intelligent than men. Indeed, men generally show superior ability at math and reasoning.

Another difference between the sexes involves spatial tasks. Men are better at reading maps, but women are better at remembering the location of objects. Perhaps men's and women's brains developed different spatial skills because of the different tasks they performed in prehistoric times. In those days, men were the hunters. They had to be able to track prey, make a kill, and then find their way back to the camp. Women, on the other hand, were the gatherers. They were responsible for finding edible leaves, roots, and berries, so they had to remember the location of particular trees and plants. Thus, men's brains were programmed to follow routes and women's to remember locations.

1. Experts agree
   Experts agree that neither sex is more intelligent than the other.

2. It is known for a long time
   It has been known for a long time that women learn languages more easily than men do.

3. Researchers prove a long time ago

4. Scientists reassure men

5. It is often observe

6. It is think by many scientists

Write two sentences of your own.

7. 

8. 

Subjunctive Noun Clauses

After certain independent clause verbs and adjectives, you must use the subjunctive form of the verb in the following noun clause. The subjunctive form of a verb is the same as the base form—be, go, come, do, and so on.

The verbs and adjectives that require the subjunctive form in the noun clauses that follow indicate urgency, advisability, necessity, and desirability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>advise</td>
<td>advisable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ask</td>
<td>desirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>command</td>
<td>essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demand</td>
<td>important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direct</td>
<td>propose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The company president urged that the marketing department be more aggressive.

It is necessary that each salesperson work longer hours.

Make a subjunctive verb negative by putting the word not in front of it

She insisted that the company not lose any more customers to its competitors.

The subjunctive also occurs when the independent clause verb is in the passive voice.

It was recommended that the department not hire new staff at this time.

**PRACTICE 3**

**Subjunctive Noun Clauses**

**Step 1** Read the following information.

**Step 2** Write complex sentences containing subjunctive noun clauses.
- Rewrite each question as a main clause.
- Use the information from the proposed restrictions to write a subjunctive noun clause.
- Combine the two clauses to make a new complex sentence.

The first one has been done for you as an example.

**Background Information**

A three-year drought has caused a serious water shortage in the fictitious country of Sunnyland. As a result, Sunnyland’s water department has recommended restrictions on water use.

---

**Sunnyland County Water Department**

Sunnyland County, Texas

Due to the recent drought in our region, the County of Sunnyland is imposing restrictions on water use, effective immediately. Violators will be subject to penalties.

**Restrictions on Water Use**

a. All citizens must conserve water wherever possible.
b. Every individual must decrease water use.
c. Every family must reduce its water use by 40 percent.
d. In the cities, everyone must limit showers to 5 minutes.
e. In the countryside, farmers must cut their water use by 25 percent.
f. Every farmer should install a drip irrigation system.
g. People in the suburbs must not use water to wash cars, sidewalks, or streets.
1. What does the water department recommend?
   The water department recommends that all citizens conserve water wherever possible.

2. What will the water department demand?

3. What is necessary?

4. What does the water department propose for city dwellers?

5. What is required of farmers?

6. What is suggested for farmers?

7. What does the water department urge for people living in suburban areas?

Write three sentences of your own using a different verb or adjective from the chart in the independent clause.

8. 

9. 

10. 

If/Whether Clauses

An if/whether clause is a dependent noun clause that begins with the subordinator whether or if. Whether is more formal than if. The optional phrase or not may be added in two places with whether and in one place with if. Therefore, there are five possible patterns:

The patient wanted to know whether Dr. Chen practices acupuncture.

The patient wanted to know whether or not Dr. Chen practices acupuncture.

The patient wanted to know whether Dr. Chen practices acupuncture or not.

The patient wants to know if Dr. Chen practices acupuncture.

The patient wants to know if Dr. Chen practices acupuncture or not.

Notice that if/whether clauses are statements, not questions, even though they are made from yes/no questions (questions that can be answered yes or no). If/whether clauses use statement word order (subject-verb) and do not contain do, does, or did.

To change a question into an if/whether clause, add a subordinator (if or whether), change the word order to statement word order, and delete do, does, and did if necessary.
Sentence Structure

Question          Sentence with *if/whether* clause
-----------------  -----------------------------------------------
Is the test easy?  The students want to know if the test is easy.

Does he know the answer?  I want to know whether he knows the answer.

Follow the sequence of tenses rules if necessary. (If the independent clause verb is in a past tense, the verb in the noun clause should also be in a past tense.)

John asked if the test was hard.

PRACTICE 4

*If/Whether Clauses*

Imagine that you are doing research on acupuncture. In addition to getting information from the library and the Internet, you have decided to write a letter to Dr. Robert Hsu, a leading authority in the field. Here are the questions you wish to ask Dr. Hsu:

1. Is acupuncture a risky medical procedure?
2. Are the needles made of stainless steel or of some other metal?
3. Do the needles hurt when they are inserted?
4. Has the effectiveness of acupuncture in relieving back pain ever been documented?
5. Can acupuncture strengthen the immune system?
6. Does acupuncture use the body's energy to promote healing?
7. Did you study acupuncture in China or in the United States?
8. Have you ever used acupuncture during an operation?

Add two questions of your own.

9. ________________________________

10. ______________________________

Complete the letter to Dr. Hsu. Change each of the ten questions into an *if/whether* clause. Add an *if/whether* clause to each incomplete sentence.

- Change the word order to SV statement order.
- Delete *do, does,* and *did* if necessary.
- Observe the sequence of tenses rules.

The first one has been done for you as an example. Use the blank lines at the end of the letter for your own questions.
415 Burleigh Avenue
Norfolk, VA 23505
July 8, 2006

Robert Hsu, M.D.
1200 South Eliseo Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90034

Dear Dr. Hsu:

I am a prenursing student at a community college in Norfolk, Virginia. I am doing research about the practice of acupuncture in China and the United States. I hope you will be kind enough to answer a few questions.

The first thing I would like to know is (1) whether or not acupuncture is a risky medical procedure. Also, can you please tell me (2) _____________________________?

People who have never had acupuncture are curious to find out (3) ___________________________. Since I have frequent backaches, I am personally interested in learning (4) ____________________________.

I also have two questions about the way acupuncture works in the body. Can you say for certain (5) _____________________________? I also wonder (6) ____________________________.

About your own background, I would like to ask (7) ____________________________.

Finally, I have heard that acupuncture is used as an anesthetic during surgery in China, and I am wondering (8) ___________________________.

(9) ____________________________.

(10) ____________________________.

Thank you sincerely for your time.

Very truly yours,

Marvin Lemos

Marvin Lemos
Question Clauses

A question clause is a dependent noun clause that begins with a subordinator such as who, what, when, where, why, how, how much, how long, and so on. There are two possible patterns. In the first pattern, the subordinator is the subject of the clause.

The police do not know who committed the robbery.

In the second pattern, the subordinator is not the subject of the clause.

The police do not know when the robbery happened.

Notice that the word order in question clauses is statement order (subject + verb), not question order (verb + subject). Also, question clauses do not contain do, does, or did because they are not questions even though they begin with a question word.

To change a question into a question clause, change the word order to statement word order and delete do, does, and did if necessary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Sentence with Question Clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What time is it?</td>
<td>Please tell me what time it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the robbers enter the apartment?</td>
<td>The police want to know how the robbers entered the apartment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow the sequence of tenses rules if necessary. (If the independent clause verb is in a past tense, the verb in the noun clause should also be in a past tense.)

The victims did not know how the robbers had entered the apartment.

Imagine that you are working as a summer intern at your local newspaper, the “Fog City News.” A well-known rock group, Behind Bars, is in town to give a concert. Your boss has asked you to write an article about the group for the Sunday entertainment section. However, when you try to interview the group, they are not very helpful.

Here is a list of questions that you have prepared for the interview.

1. When and where will the concert take place?
2. When did you last perform in Fog City?
3. How many years have you been together as a group?
4. Who writes your songs?
5. Where do you practice on the road?
6. How many songs have you recorded?
7. Which company produces your CDs?
8. How many Grammys do you have?

Add two questions of your own.

9. 
10. 

Complete the memo that follows. Explain to your boss why you cannot write the article. Change each of the ten questions into a question clause. Add a question clause to each incomplete sentence.
• Change the word order to SV statement order.
• Delete do, does, and did if necessary.
• Observe the sequence of tenses rules.

The first one has been done for you as an example. Use the blank lines at the end of the memo for your own questions.

Interoffice Memorandum

Date: ______________________, 2005

To: Warren Carreiro, Editor
    Sunday Entertainment Section

From: ________________________, Summer Intern

Re: Proposed article about Behind Bars rock band

Unfortunately, I will not be able to write an article for the Sunday entertainment section because my interview with Behind Bars was not very successful.

I began the interview by asking (1) when and where the concert would take place. Then I asked (2) ________________________________.
In my next question, I tried to find out (3) _________________________________. They did not give me any information at all. For instance, they did not reveal (4) _________________________________. They also did not tell me (5) _________________________________. No one remembered (6) _________________________________.
They told me to ask their manager (7) _________________________________. The entire group was silent when I asked them (8) _________________________________. Finally, I asked them (9) _________________________________. They ended the interview without even telling me (10) _________________________________.

__________________________
(your signature)

__________________________
(your name)
Review

These are the important points covered in this chapter.

1. A noun clause is a dependent clause that acts like a noun.

   John asked the question. John asked which chapter the exam would cover.

2. A noun clause can act as a subject, an object, or a subject complement. That clauses can also follow certain adjectives and nouns. The most common position of a noun clause is after the verb of the main (independent) clause.

3. Starting a sentence with a noun clause is awkward. English speakers usually rewrite these sentences so that they begin with *it* and end with the noun clause.

   That the professor canceled the exam surprised us.

   It surprised us that the professor canceled the exam.

   Whether the professor will reschedule the exam is uncertain.

   It is uncertain whether the professor will reschedule the exam.

4. Passive voice is often used in these kinds of sentences, especially in academic writing.

   It was once believed by many that Earth was flat.

5. When a noun clause reports what someone asked or said, you must follow the sequence of tenses rules for reported speech.

6. Following verbs and adjectives indicating urgency, advisability, necessity, and desirability, use the base form of the verb in the noun clause. This kind of noun clause is called a subjunctive noun clause.

   It is necessary that students be on time for the final exam.

7. Noun clauses use statement word order even when they begin with a question word. They also do not contain *do, does, or did* because they are not questions.

8. Commas are not used with noun clauses.
### Types of Noun Clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>That clauses</strong></th>
<th>The Russian president and his wife told the press (that) they were enjoying their visit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • formed from statements
• introduced by subordinator *that*
• *that* can be omitted |                                                                                         |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Subjunctive noun clauses</strong></th>
<th>The president of the United States suggested that Russia open its doors to U.S. business.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• verb in base form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• occur after verbs and adjectives of urgency, advisability, necessity, and desirability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Question clauses</strong></th>
<th>Do you know who the interpreter for the Russian leader was?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• formed from <em>wh-</em> questions; <em>wh-</em> words are the subordinators: <em>who, where, which, how, etc.</em></td>
<td>The reporter asked which companies planned to do business in Russia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use SV statement word order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <em>do, does, did</em> disappear</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>If/Whether clauses</strong></th>
<th>The question is whether (or not) U.S. and European companies understand the Russian business environment (or not).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • formed from *yes/no* questions
• introduced by subordinator *if* or *whether. *Whether* is more formal than *if.*
• *or not* may be added
• use SV statement word order
• *do, does, did* disappear | No one knows if the experiment will succeed (or not).                                                                                      |

### Editing Practice

Edit the composition that follows on page 208 for errors in noun clauses. You should make 21 changes. Look for these kinds of errors:

- **Incorrect word order**
- **Missing subordinator**
- **Incorrect word order**
- **Sequence of tenses rules not followed**
- **Subjunctive verb not used**
- **Incorrect punctuation**

We do not know who is she. if there is A careful shopper asks is there a warranty on a product before buying it. The newspaper reported that world leaders had failed to agree at the conference. Environmentalists urged that carbon dioxide emissions be decreased immediately. Everyone wonders when world peace will become a reality. Everyone hopes that peace will come soon.
A College Lecture

Professor Sanchez gave a lecture on transistors last Tuesday. First, he explained what are transistors. He said, that they are very small electronic devices used in telephones, automobiles, radios, and so on. He further explained that transistors control the flow of electric current in electronic equipment. He wanted to know which popular technological invention cannot operate without transistors. Most students agreed, it is the personal computer. Professor Sanchez then asked if the students know how do transistors function in computers. He said that the transistors were etched1 into tiny silicon microchips and that these transistors increase computers’ speed and data storage capacity. Then he asked the class when had transistors been invented? Sergei guessed that they were invented in 1947. The professor said that he is correct. Professor Sanchez then asked what was the importance of this invention? Many students answered that it is the beginning of the information age. At the end of the lecture, the professor assigned a paper on transistors. He requested that each student chooses a topic by next Monday. He suggested that the papers are typed.

Writing Practice

Imagine that you are going to graduate from the university a year from now, and you are interested in seeing what kinds of positions employers are offering to graduates in your field (business, engineering, teaching, and so on). You could look in your local newspaper to see what job opportunities are available. The following are examples of ads that you might find.

College Grad


Engineering Graduates

Must possess degree in electrical/chemical/industrial engineering. Company is expanding. Job opportunities on U.S. West or East Coasts and in Middle East. Letters of inquiry are welcome. Write: Frank Memry, MHC Engineering, Inc., 475 Evanston Drive, Santa Clara, CA 94301. Equal Opportunity Employer.

1etched: cut into the surface
If you are planning to become an accountant or an engineer, you might answer one of these ads. If you have a different career preference, look in your local newspaper for an ad that fits your needs, and attach the ad to your assignment.

Write a letter of inquiry using noun clauses. Use that clauses to state information that you already know ("Your ad stated that your company was seeking ... "). Use wh- word clauses and if/whether clauses to ask for information. You might want to inquire about the size of the company, travel requirements, salary, benefits, number of employees, advancement opportunities, support for further education, and so on.

Use the letter in Practice 4 on page 203 as a model. Notice the punctuation in the addresses and the greeting and closing. Also note the capitalization of proper nouns, of the word Dear, and of the first word of the closing. Study the line spacing between different parts of the letter. When you write your own letter, follow this format exactly.