Noun Clause

This section is an overview of noun clauses and their functions in sentences in English. Specifically, this section provides. . .

- a definition of noun clauses,
- a list of the eight different functions of noun clauses in sentences in English,
- and eight example sentences to illustrate the eight functions.

Noun Clause

A noun clause is a group of words. . .

- that functions as one unit;
- that has its own subject-verb combination,
- that functions in a sentence as a noun or pronoun functions,
- that often has a subordinator,
- and that may **not** stand alone as a complete sentence.

Noun clauses may function in sentences as . . .

- subjects,
- complements,
- objects of verbs,
- objects of gerunds,

- objects of infinitives,
- objects of prepositions,
- objects of participles,
- and as complements of adjectives.

Noun Clause

A noun clause as a subject:

- *That she left early* surprised us.

The noun clause here, "That she left early," functions as the subject of the verb "surprised." The subject-verb combination of the noun clause is "she left," and the subordinator is "that." The verb of the independent clause is "surprised," and the noun clause functions here as its subject.

Noun Clause

A noun clause as a complement:

- The problem was *that she left early*.

The noun clause here, "that she left early," functions as a complement of the subject "problem" in the independent clause.   The subject-verb combination of this noun clause is "she left," and the subordinator is "that." The subject-verb combination of the independent clause is "problem was.".

Noun Clause

A noun clause as an object of a verb:

- We didn't realize *that she left early*.

The noun clause here, "that she left early," functions as an object of the verb "did…realize" in the independent clause. The subject-verb combination of this noun clause is "she left," and its subordinator is "that." The subject-verb combination of the independent clause is "We did…realize."

Noun Clause

A noun clause as an object of a gerund:

- Finding out *that she left early* relieved our worry.

The noun clause here, "that she left early," functions as an object of the gerund "Finding out." The subject-verb combination of the noun clause is "she left," and its subordinator is "that." The gerund "Finding out" functions as the subject of the verb "relieved."

Noun Clause

A noun clause as an object of an infinitive:

- He needs to know *that she left early*.

The noun clause here, "that she left early," functions as an object of the infinitive "to know." The subject-verb combination of the noun clause is "she left," and its subordinator is "that." The infinitive "to know" functions in the independent clause as an object of the verb "needs."

Noun Clause

A noun clause as an object of a preposition:

- The gossip was about *why she left early*.

The noun clause here, "why she left early," functions as an object of the preposition "about." The subject-verb combination of this noun clause is "she left," and its subordinator is "why." The prepositional phrase and the noun clause together function as a complement of the subject "gossip."

Noun Clause

A noun clause as an object of a participle:

- Realizing *that she left early*, we left too.

The noun clause here, "that she left early," functions as an object of the participle "Realizing" in the independent clause. The subject-verb combination of the noun clause is "she left," and its subordinator is "that." In this case, "that" may be omitted.

Noun Clause

A noun clause as a complement of an adjective:

- Are you sure *that she left early*?

The noun clause here, "that she left early," functions as a complement of the adjective "sure." The subject-verb combination of the noun clause is "she left," and its subordinator is "that." In the independent clause, the adjective "sure" functions as a complement of the subject "you."

Noun Clause

Noun clauses may function in eight different ways in sentences in English. As an overview of noun clauses, this section provides an example of a noun clause fulfilling each of the eight functions. Return to "Noun Clauses" to see more examples of noun clauses in each of the grammatical functions, or move on to study the various subordinators that may appear in noun clauses.

Noun Clauses