

High-Intermediate 3
Unit 4 Grammar
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Clauses

A clause in English grammar is **a group of words that contains a subject and a verb**, forming the foundation of a sentence.

Clauses are essential building blocks of sentences, and they come in different types depending on their function and independence:

Types of Clauses

Independent Clause: Expresses a complete thought and can stand alone as a sentence.

Example: She sings beautifully.

Dependent Clause (also called subordinate clause): Cannot stand alone and depends on an independent clause to complete its meaning.

Example: Because she sings beautifully (needs more to be a full sentence).

Subtypes of Dependent Clauses

Noun Clause: Functions as a noun within a sentence.

Example: **What she said** was surprising.

Adjective Clause: Describes a noun, often introduced by relative pronouns like who, which, or that.

Example: The book **that you gave me** is fascinating.

Adverbial Clause: Modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb, often introduced by subordinating conjunctions like because, although, if, when.

Example: **If it rains**, we'll stay inside.

Why Clauses Matter

- They help structure complex thoughts.
- They allow writers and speakers to express conditions, reasons, contrasts, and more.
- Understanding clauses improves sentence variety and clarity in writing.

Point:

In units 4 and 5 of your book, you study noun clauses. Unit 6 deals with adjective clauses and adverb clauses are discussed in unit 7.

Noun Clauses

A noun clause is a group of words with a subject and verb that functions as a noun within a sentence. It can act as the subject, object, or complement, and often begins with words like *that*, *what*, *who*, *whom*, *why*, *how*, *if*, or *whether*.

What Makes a Clause a "Noun Clause"?

- **It contains a subject and a verb**, making it a clause.
- **It performs the role of a noun** in the sentence.
- **It cannot stand alone** as a complete sentence (it's a dependent clause).

Common Functions of Noun Clauses

Function	Example	Role in Sentence
Subject	<i>What she said</i> surprised everyone.	Subject of the verb "surprised"
Object	They believed <i>that he was honest</i> .	Object of the verb "believed"
Complement	The truth is <i>that she lied</i> .	Complement of the linking verb "is"
Object of preposition	We were curious about <i>what he meant</i> .	Object of the preposition "about"

Point:

In unit 5, the use of noun clauses as the complement will be discussed thoroughly.

How to Identify a Noun Clause

- Look for **question words** or **conjunctions** like *what*, *that*, *who*, *whether*.
- Check if the clause answers **"what?"** or **"who?"** in relation to the verb.
- Replace the clause with a simple noun like "something" or "somebody"—if the sentence still makes sense, it's likely a noun clause.

More Examples

- *I know that patience has its limits* → "that patience has its limits" is the object of "know".
- *She wondered why the sky is blue* → "why the sky is blue" is the object of "wondered".
- *Where they are going* is unclear → noun clause as subject.

Point:

When a that-clause functions as a subjective noun clause, we can use the word "the fact" before it to make our sentence easier to understand and more beautiful stylistically.

Example:

That Tom doesn't know Sally's address bothers him. => **Subject Noun Clause**

The fact **that Tom doesn't know Sally's address** bothers him. => **Adjective Clause**

Modifying the Noun Phrase "the fact"

Comparison and Contrast of Noun Clauses and Adjective Clauses

Noun clauses act as nouns in a sentence, while adjective clauses function like adjectives, modifying nouns. Both are dependent clauses but serve distinct grammatical roles.

Here's a detailed comparison to help you distinguish them clearly:

Noun Clauses

- **Function:** Acts as a noun — can be a subject, object, or complement.
- **Examples:**
 - *What she said* surprised everyone. (Subject)
 - I don't know *why he left*. (Object)
 - The truth is *that he lied*. (Complement)
- **Introduced by:** Words like *that, what, who, whom, why, how, whether, if*.
- **Answers:** Questions like *what?, who?, why?, how?* — often expressing ideas, thoughts, or unknowns.
- **Cannot stand alone:** Always part of a larger sentence.

Adjective Clauses

- **Function:** Acts as an adjective — modifies a noun or pronoun.
- **Examples:**
 - The book *that you gave me* is fascinating.
 - She's the artist *who painted that mural*.
- **Introduced by:** Relative pronouns like *who, whom, whose, which, that*.
- **Answers:** Questions like *which one?, what kind?, whose?* — adds descriptive detail.
- **Always follows the noun it modifies.**

Key Differences between Noun Clauses and Adjective Clauses

Feature	Noun Clause	Adjective Clause
Grammatical Role	Acts as a noun	Acts as an adjective
Position	Can be subject, object, or complement	Follows the noun it modifies
Introducers	that, what, why, how, whether, if	who, whom, whose, which, that
Function	Expresses ideas or unknowns	Adds descriptive detail to a noun
Example	I believe <i>that she is honest</i> .	The woman <i>who is honest</i> is my friend.

Comparison and Contrast of Noun Clauses and Adverb Clauses

Noun clauses and adverb clauses are both types of dependent (or subordinate) clauses, but they serve very different roles in a sentence. Here's a breakdown to help you compare and contrast them:

Noun Clauses

Definition: A noun clause functions as a noun within a sentence.

Roles in a sentence:

- Subject: *What she said* surprised everyone.
- Object: I don't know *where he went*.
- Complement: The truth is *that he lied*.

Introduced by: words like *that, what, who, whom, where, why, how, whether, if*, etc.

Can be replaced by a noun or pronoun:

- “*What she said* surprised everyone” → “*It* surprised everyone.”

Adverb Clauses

Definition: An adverb clause modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb by providing information about time, cause, condition, contrast, or manner.

Roles in a sentence:

- Time: I'll call you *when I arrive*.
- Cause: He left *because he was tired*.
- Condition: *If it rains*, we'll cancel the picnic.
- Contrast: *Although she tried*, she couldn't finish the race.

Introduced by: subordinating conjunctions like *because, although, if, when, while, since, until, unless*, etc.

Can be moved around in the sentence:

- “*If it rains*, we'll cancel the picnic” → “We'll cancel the picnic *if it rains*.”

Key Differences between Noun Clauses & Adverb Clauses

Feature	Noun Clause	Adverb Clause
Function	Acts as a noun	Acts as an adverb
Modifies	Nothing (it is a noun)	Verb, adjective, or adverb
Can be replaced by	A noun or pronoun	Not replaceable by a noun
Introduced by	Interrogative words, “that,” “if”	Subordinating conjunctions
Sentence flexibility	Fixed position (subject/object)	Often movable within the sentence