

NOUN CLAUSES

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Definition: A noun clause is a type of clause that acts as a noun in a sentence.

Noun clauses perform the same functions in sentences as nouns:

1) Subject of a verb

Whoever scores the next point will win the game.
(subject of verb phrase *will win*)

2) Object of a verb

She could see that the water was very deep.
(direct object of verb *see*)

The dentist will give whoever doesn't cry a free stick of sugar-free gum.
(indirect object of verb phrase *will give*)

3) Subject complement

My problem is that my hair is falling out.
(describes the subject *problem*)

4) Object of a preposition

I wish my girlfriend would stop talking about when she wants to get married.
(object of preposition *about*)

5) Adjective complement

I was sad that my gerbil died.
(completes meaning of adjective *sad*)

Reporting verbs

A noun clause can be used to report what someone has said without using quotation marks or writing from the point of view of the reporter.

It has been reported that drinking four cups of coffee a day is good for your health.

Maintaining verb tense agreement in noun clauses

- If the reporting verb is in present or future tense, the noun clause verb is not changed.
- If the reporting verb is in the past, the noun clause verb will usually be in a past form.

Exceptions:

- If the reported sentence deals with a fact or general truth, the present tense is used.

*She said that the earth **orbits** around the sun.*

- If *will* was used in the reported statement and expresses future time, and if the statement still holds true, the *will* may not be changed to *would*.

*The scientist said that 2016 **will be** the hottest year on record.*

Exercises

Practice finding noun clauses: underline the clause and identify its function in the sentence (subject, object of verb, object of preposition, etc.)

1. How we survived the snowstorm is still a mystery.
2. My little brother doesn't know how to talk to girls.
3. Passengers were told why the flight was delayed.
4. Doctors provide treatment to whoever needs it.
5. The professor said that I will get an A in his class.

Sources

Bright Hub Education <http://www.brighthouseeducation.com/esl-lesson-plans>
Language Portal of Canada www.ourlanguages.gc.ca
John Fleming, De Anza College <http://faculty.deanza.edu/flemingjohn/>