# The Writing Center

# Directed Learning Activity

Student Name: Instructor:

# About This DLA

## Important Note

**Noun Clauses**

Date: Course:

All the activities (3) in the DLA must be completed in their entirety before receiving credit for completion. Students are welcome to meet with a tutor if they need help, but please be aware that students might need a second appointment for review and signature in that case. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, return this form to him or her with the tutor’s signature included.

## 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*:

**think**

**understand**

**say**

**tell**

**know**

**read**

**agree**

**believe**

### 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*:

**surprised**

**worried**

**proud**

**sure**

**confident**

**happy**

**aware**

**certain**

### 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:

**true**

**well known**

**obvious**

**possible**

**important**

**interesting**

**clear**

**good**

### 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 *Wh-*Question** | **Noun Clause with an Indirect *Wh*-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. *(simple present)*  She **has said** that she is traveling to Italy. *(present perfect)*  She **will say** that she is traveling to Italy. *(simple future)* |

### 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.” *(simple present)* | She *said* that she **finished** her work every night.  *(simple past)* |
| “I **am finishing** the work tomorrow.” *(present progressive)* | She *said* she that **was finishing** the work tomorrow. *(past progressive)* |
| “I **finished** the work yesterday.” *(simple past)* | She *said* that she finished the work yesterday.  *(simple past – no change)*  She said that she **had finished** the work yesterday. *(past perfect)* |
| “I **have** already **finished** the work.” *(present perfect)* | She *said* that she **had** already **finished** the work.  *(past perfect)* |
| “I **had finished** the work earlier.” *(past perfect)* | She *said* that she **had finished** the work earlier.  *(past perfect – no backshifting possible)* |

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.” “Students **have to** go to the Writing Center.” | He *said* that students **had 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. |

Do not change the following modals even if the reporting verb is in past tense.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **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 ex below, the noun clause is **bolded** and the subjunctive verb is

cy or advice. In the sentences

press urgen

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 their phones in class**.

**not use**

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 in classroom safety**.

**be trained**

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

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ask (that)**  **demand (that)** |  | **insist (that)**  **recommend (that)** | **suggest (that)**  **it is essential (that)** | **it is important**  **it is necessary** | **(that)**  **(that)** |
| **Examples** |  |  |  |  |  |
| * I suggest ***that he*** | ***see*** | ***a specialist***. |  |  |  |

* It is essential ***that children***

***not miss***

# Activities

***school***.

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 [Noun Clause DLA Quiz.](http://tinyurl.com/NounClausesDLA) You must score at least 80% on the exercises before seeing a tutor. After you complete the task, **PLEASE ASK A LAB TUTOR OR FRONT DESK ATTENDANT TO PRINT THE PAGE THAT HAS YOUR SCORE. DO NOT EXIT THE PROGRAM UNTIL THIS PAGE HAS BEEN PRINTED (FREE OF CHARGE).** If you have any

other questions, do not hesitate to ask a lab tutor.

## 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 a noun clauses 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

Go to https://mtsac2.mywconline.com and use the [Mt. SAC Writing Center Appointment System](https://mtsac2.mywconline.com/) to make a DLA appointment, or sign-up to see a tutor on the “**Walk-in**” list in the Writing Center. During your session with a tutor, refer to your own graded writing (or the completed activity) and explain your work to demonstrate your understanding of noun clauses.

Student’s Signature:

Tutor’s Signature

Date: Date:

*If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center’s website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students,* [access@mtsac.edu*,*](mailto:access@mtsac.edu) *(909) 274-4290.*

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