

# Noun Clauses: Subjects, Objects, and Complements

## I. RECOGNIZING NOUN CLAUSES

*Read this conversation between a teacher (B) and his student (A). There are 20 noun clauses. The first one is already underlined. Find and underline 19 more.*

**A:** Is it really true that a plant will grow better if you talk to it?

**B:** Yes. Studies have shown how much better plants grow when they are talked to.

**A:** But, plants don't have sound receptors or nervous systems, so can you tell us why that is?

**B:** Scientists know that plants aren't responding to the specific words people say. What happens is very interesting. When you talk, you breathe out carbon dioxide and water vapor. That plants need carbon dioxide and water in order to grow is basic. They get more of these two vital nutrients from your breath. And, sound waves from your voice cause plant cells to vibrate. Experiments have demonstrated that certain types and strengths of sound can affect plants. These sounds can cause plants to grow better – or worse – than usual. An interesting result, for example, is what plants have done after being exposed to classical music: they grew thick, healthy leaves and developed good roots.

**A:** Only classical music? It makes a difference if the plants hear classical music or other kinds of music?

**B:** Well, it's interesting that it does not seem to matter. Plants seem to care about what kind of music they "hear." Jazz has also had a beneficial effect. And plants exposed to country music had normal growth. But, plants that were exposed to rock music did very poorly. Their root development was so terrible that the plants began to die.

**A:** No way! Do plants actually know who they are listening to—whether they are listening to Mozart or Green Day?

**B:** Not exactly "know." What they do is sense the vibrations, and apparently they can differentiate the types of rhythm and number of decibels.

**A:** Hmmm. Well, here's what I think: The fact that you talk to your plants is good because it means that you are paying attention to them. What you are doing is giving them the water and food and pruning they need, and not letting them die of neglect.

**B:** That's true. The issue of whether plants live or die depends on their receiving nutrients. But the answer to your original question—whether or not plants actually *do better* when you talk to them—is definitely yes.

## II. FORMING NOUN CLAUSES BEGINNING WITH QUESTION WORDS

*Read this excerpt from a game show. Complete the contestants' answers by writing noun clauses based on the host's questions.*

HOST: OK, Contestant Number 1, Jerry. Answer this: When did Neil Armstrong walk on the moon?

JERRY: Hmm. I don't know 1. when Neil Armstrong (he) walked on the moon.

HOST: Sorry, Jerry. It was in 1969. OK, Contestant Number 2, Mary, answer this: Where will the 2010 Olympic Games be held?

MARY: Oh, I'm not sure where 2. \_\_\_\_\_. Is it Australia?

HOST: No, Mary. It's Vancouver, in Canada. All right, Contestant Number 3, Jose: In chemistry—what is the symbol for ozone?

JOSE: I know what 3. \_\_\_\_\_. It's O<sup>3</sup>.

HOST: Correct! Now, Jose, you are eligible for the grand prize! Are you ready for the next three questions?

JOSE: Yes, I am.

HOST: OK, Jose—for the grand prize, answer these three questions correctly: First—what does *numeracy* mean?

JOSE: What 4. \_\_\_\_\_ is to be literate in basic mathematics.

HOST: Yes! You're absolutely correct! Now, to double your earnings, answer this: What is the biggest bone in the body?

JOSE: I know what 5. \_\_\_\_\_. It's the femur.

HOST: Right again! Now, if you get this last question correct, you will win the grand prize. Jose, why do some fish swim upstream, that is, against the current of the river?

JOSE: Hmm. Why 6. \_\_\_\_\_ upstream is obvious: They do it to breed. Like Pacific salmon—they swim for hundreds of miles upstream to lay their eggs before they die.

HOST: Excellent! You have won the grand prize! Congratulations!

## III. FORMING NOUN CLAUSES BEGINNING WITH *WHETHER* OR *IF*

*The newscaster has just announced that because of a storm, schools in Casper County will be closed today. The Mason family is reacting to the announcement. Read the family members' questions. Then complete the sentences based on the questions. Use noun clauses with **whether (or not)** or **if**.*

1. MOTHER: Is there going to be mail delivery?

Mother wants to know whether or not / if there is going to be mail delivery.

2. SALLY: Will the stores be closed?

Sally is uncertain \_\_\_\_\_.

3. DAD: Are the buses running?  
Dad needs to find out \_\_\_\_\_.
4. JACK: Is there enough food in the house?  
Jack is wondering \_\_\_\_\_.
5. MOTHER: Are the roads safe?  
\_\_\_\_\_ isn't clear to Mother.
6. SALLY: Is the electricity going to go off?  
Sally wants to know \_\_\_\_\_.
7. JACK: Does anyone want to play Scrabble?  
Jack is asking \_\_\_\_\_.
8. DAD: Do I have to go to work?  
No one has told Dad \_\_\_\_\_.
9. MOTHER: Will Aunt Catherine's plane be flying?  
It's unclear \_\_\_\_\_.
10. SALLY AND JACK: Are the schools going to be closed tomorrow, too?  
The question is \_\_\_\_\_.

#### IV. FORMING NOUN CLAUSES

*Read this office conversation. Complete the answers by writing noun clauses based on the questions.*

Q: Who told the boss about Marla?

A: I don't know 1. who told the boss about Marla (her).

Q: What did he say to Marla?

A: I don't know 2. \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: Is it true that Marla is upset?

A: 3. \_\_\_\_\_ is an understatement. She is furious!

Q: Where is Marla now?

A: I can't imagine 4. \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: Well, what is Marla going to do?

A: 5. \_\_\_\_\_ is no concern of mine.

Q: Is Marla going to get fired?

A: I have no idea 6. \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: Is Marla going to be arrested?

A: Arrested? I have no idea 7. \_\_\_\_\_!

Q: What about the stolen money? I am talking about...

A: Stolen money? I don't know 8. \_\_\_\_\_ talking about!

Q: What do you think we are talking about?

A: 9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the fact that Marla comes to work late every day, isn't it?