***STRUCTURE IT***

**USING NOUN CLAUSES**

**Situation**

John and Susan work in the same office. Another colleague, Larry, had asked them to meet with him on Monday morning at 7:00 a.m. to discuss a pressing issue.

It is now 7:20 a.m. on Monday. John and Susan are in the office. Larry has not shown up or called. **Read the conversation** that John and Susan are having:

John: Where is Larry?

Susan: I don't know where he is.

John: When did he leave the house?

Susan: I can't tell you when he left. I called his place five minutes ago, but no one answered.

John: He must be on his way then. How does he get to the office? Does he drive?

Susan: I've never asked him how he gets here.

John: Why don't we ask his secretary what time she expects him?

Susan: None of the secretaries get in before 8:30. I'm sure we're the only ones here this early.

John: I hope Larry's okay. I'm getting kind of worried about what might have happened to him.

Susan: He's probably stuck in traffic. Why he wanted to meet so early is a mystery to me!

**Function of a Noun Clause**

The underlined statements in the preceding conversation are all examples of **noun clauses**.

Noun clauses are used in a sentence to describe actions which are ***subordinate*** to the main action of the sentence.

Let's look closely at some of John's and Susan's statements:

John: When did he leave the house?

Susan: I don't know when he left.

The **action** expressed in *John's* **question** is **leave**.

The **main action** expressed in *Susan's* **response** is **know**.

"When he left" describes an **action** which is ***subordinate*** to the **main action** (**know**) of the sentence.

A **noun clause** gets its name from the ***function*** it serves.

A ***noun*** is the name of a **person**, **place**, or **thing**.

Examples of nouns are:

**-** my boss

**-** the affidavit

**-** a witness

A ***noun*** can **function** as:

(1) **subject** of a verb

**-** **His reasons** are a mystery to me.

(2) **object** of a (transitive) verb

**-** I don't know **his location**.

(3) **object** of a preposition

**-** I'm worried about **my colleague.**

A ***clause*** is composed of a ***subject*** and a ***verb***.

Examples of clauses are:

**-** She knows

**-** My boss went

**-** The client isn't coming

A ***noun clause*** has the ***same functions*** as a noun.

A **noun clause** can function as:

(1) the **subject** of a verb

(2) the **object** of a verb

(3) the **object** of a preposition

***For example:***

(1) *subject* of a verb

**His reasons** are a mystery to me.

***Why he wanted to meet*** is a mystery to me.

(2) *object* of a verb

I don't know **his location**.

I don't know ***where he is***.

(3) *object* of a preposition

I'm worried about **my colleague**.

I'm worried about ***what might have happened to him*.**

In each of the above examples, the **noun** has been **replaced** by a ***description*** of that noun.

The ***description*** is expressed by means of a ***subject*** and a ***verb***, that is, by means of a ***clause***.

**Form of a Noun Clause**

As explained earlier, noun clauses function in the sentence to describe actions which are ***subordinate*** to the main action.

Therefore, a **noun clause must be introduced by a *subordinating conjunction***.

A *conjunction* is a word that joins two actions. *And* and *but* are typical *conjunctions.*

***For example:***

She leaves work *and* picks up her kids from school.

He understands almost everything, *but* he has a hard time expressing himself.

The ***subordinating*** *conjunction* joins a ***subordinate action*** to the **main action**.

***For example:***

I don't know why they refused to arbitrate.

**main action** **subordinate action**

***subordinating***

***conjunction***

The ***first* *word*** of the noun clause must be a ***subordinating conjunction***.

Because most noun clauses describe *who, what, when, where, whose, which,* and *how*, the ***subordinating conjunctions*** used to **introduce noun clauses** are almost always **WH-words**.

***For example:***

They can't remember ***where* they put that file**.

(1) The ***wh-word*** indicates the ***kind*** **of information** the noun clause contains:

*location* = ***where***.

(2) The ***subject*** of the noun clause **must follow** the ***subordinating conjunction***:

**where *they***.

(3) The ***verb*** of the noun clause **follows** the **subject**, just as in any other clause:

**where they *put***

**NOTE**

Sometimes the ***subordinator*** is used as the **subject** of the **noun clause**. For example:

I can't remember ***who* told me that.**

I'm very interested in ***what* happened.**

In these instances, the verb ***follows*** the wh-word.

**REMEMBER** Use **sentential** -- *not* interrogative -- word order in noun clauses.

CORRECT: We objected to **what she said**.

INCORRECT: We objected to what did she say.

The ***function*** of the auxiliary (*do*, *did*) in the interrogative is to notify the listener (or the reader) that a question is being asked. Information is requested in a question, and the listener/reader must typically provide this information in his/her response.

***For example:***

**Why** did he leave the firm?

The listener/reader has to provide an answer:

**Because** he . . . .

**However**, in the following statement:

I can't tell you **why he left the firm**.

there is no information requested.

**Instead**

I can't tell you **why he left the firm**.

is equivalent to:

I can't tell you **his reason**.

**EXERCISES**

**Answer** the following questions using a noun clause as indicated:

Example:

**What** did the client say?

I can't discuss **what the client said.**

1. Where are they holding next month's conference?

I don't know \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. When will they be ready for trial?

They haven’t told me \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. How much are they claiming in damages?

I still haven’t heard \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Who are their key witnesses?

We’ll find out tomorrow \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5. Why didn’t they include an arbitration clause in that contract?

I can't understand \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6. Whose office should we use?

It doesn't matter \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

7. What is the definition of *materiality* in that jurisdiction?

My associate is checking \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**YOUR TURN**

**ANSWER SHEET**

1. Where are they holding next month's conference?

I don't know **where they're holding next month's conference.**

2. When will they be ready for trial?

They haven’t told me **when they’ll be ready for trial**.

3. How much are they claiming in damages?

I still haven’t heard **how much they’re claiming in damages.**

4. Who are their key witnesses?

We’ll find out tomorrow **who their key witnesses are**.

5. Why didn’t they include an arbitration clause in that contract?

I can't understand **why they didn’t include an arbitration clause in that contract.**

6. Whose office should we use?

It doesn't matter **whose office we use.**

7. What is the definition of *materiality* in that jurisdiction?

My associate is checking **what the definition of *materiality* is in that jurisdiction**.