

more about question-word clauses

Clauses beginning with question-words can act as subjects, objects or complements in sentences, rather like nouns.

Who you invite is your business. Do you see **how he treats me**?
I often think about where I met you. A hot bath is **what I need**.

This is common in indirect speech (see page 218).

He didn't tell us where he was going. Ask her **when she'll be ready**.

Question-word clauses beginning with *how* are often rather informal. Compare:

I'm surprised at how fast she can run. (informal) I'm surprised at **her speed**.

Subject clauses often come later, with *it* as an introductory subject (see page 228).

It's your business who you invite. *It doesn't matter where we stay.*

At the beginning of a sentence we use *whether*, not *if*.

Whether we can stay here isn't yet certain. (NOT *If we can stay here isn't yet certain.*)

1 Rewrite these sentences with question-word clauses.

- ▶ This is the amount that I've done. (*how*) *This is how much I've done.*
- Her address is not important. (*where*)
.....
 - You can do the job in any way you like. (*how*)
.....
 - Our arrangements will depend on her time of arrival. (*what time*)
.....
 - I don't know his date of birth. (*when*)
.....
 - Can you ask about their wishes? (*what*)
.....
 - Their reason for being here is not at all clear. (*why*)
.....
 - I'll spend my money in any way I choose. (*how*)
.....
 - His knowledge of French doesn't matter. (*whether*)
.....

whoever, whatever, whichever These three words can begin subject and object clauses.

Whoever phoned just now was very polite. Use **whichever** room you like.
Whatever is in that box is making a funny noise.

2 Rewrite the words in italics with *whoever, whatever* or *whichever*.

- ▶ I'll marry *the person I choose*. *whoever I choose.*
- Send it to *the person who pays the bills*.
.....
 - This is for *anybody who wants it*.
.....
 - Take *anything that you want*.
.....
 - I'll agree to *anything that you say*.
.....
 - The person who gets this job* will have a difficult time.
.....
 - The team that wins* will play United in the next round.
.....

For prepositions dropped before clauses (e.g. *Look (at) what you've done*), see page 196.

For *whoever, whatever* etc in adverb clauses, see page 243.

preparatory it

preparatory subject When the subject of a sentence is a **clause**, we generally use **it** as a **preparatory subject**, and put the **clause later**.

It's odd that he hasn't phoned. (More natural than *That he hasn't phoned is odd.*)

It was amazing how many languages she spoke. *It doesn't matter who knows.*

The same thing happens when the subject is a clause beginning with an infinitive (or an infinitive alone).

It's important to read page 12. (More natural than *To read page 12 is important.*)

It was good to relax.

In an informal style, we sometimes use the same structure with *-ing* form subjects.

It's boring listening to him. *It was nice seeing you.*

1 Use *It's* and the expressions in the box to complete the sentences. Different answers may be possible.

a pity amazing doesn't interest me exciting nice probable strange surprising
typical of him upset everybody your task

▶ how many unhappy marriages there are

It's surprising how many unhappy marriages there are.

1 to steal the secret formula

2 what she can do with a few leftovers out of the fridge

3 how they all disappear when it's time to do some work

4 that he kept swearing at the referee

5 what you think

6 that so few people came

7 to forget to buy the tickets

8 when a baby starts talking

9 that we'll be a little late

10 being back home

Note also the structure *It looks as if/though ...*

It looks as if she's going to win. *It looks as though we'll miss the train.*

2 Write a sentence about tomorrow's weather.

▶ *It looks as if it's going to snow / it might be extremely hot / ...*

Note: We don't normally use preparatory *it* for a noun subject.

The new concert hall is wonderful. (NOT USUALLY *It's wonderful the new concert hall.*)

preparatory object In some cases, we can use **it** as a **preparatory object**. This happens when a clause or infinitive object has a **complement**.

I find it odd that Andy's away. (More natural than *I find that Andy's away odd.*)
My blister made it a problem to walk.

BUT *I can't bear to upset him.* (NOT *I can't bear it to upset him.* The infinitive clause *to upset him* has no complement.)

Note the use of **as** after *regard*, *see* and *view*.

I regard it as thoroughly bad manners that they never thanked us.

3 Put in **it** or **nothing (-)** to make correct sentences.

- 1 She made clear that she disagreed.
- 2 We found tiring to listen to him.
- 3 Oliver can't bear to be alone for long periods.
- 4 I consider a crime that they've put up VAT again.
- 5 Do you think right that Nicole didn't get the job?
- 6 I forgot that I had promised to phone Josie.
- 7 Everybody knew that there was something wrong.
- 8 The friendly atmosphere of the school made a pleasure to study there.
- 9 I always find a strain to pack when I'm going away.
- 10 I regard as really irritating to have to carry identification everywhere.

other cases We also use preparatory *it* in some cases when there is no complement. This happens: in the structures *owe it to ...* and *leave it to ...*

We owe it to society to help those who need help. *I'll leave it to you to inform the other members.*

in the structures *like/love/hate it + clause*

We love it when you sing.

in the structure *take it that ...*

I take it that you won't be working tomorrow. (= 'I assume/suppose that ...')

in the structure *would appreciate it if ...*

We would appreciate it if you would keep us informed.

4 Complete the sentences with words from the box and **it**

appreciate hate leave take owe

- 1 Children often when you treat them like children.
- 2 We to our parents to keep them young by constantly surprising them.
- 3 I would if you would turn down your radio a little.
- 4 Can we to Alison to book the hotel?
- 5 You're looking depressed. I you didn't get the job.

'It would have been cheaper to lower the Atlantic.'
(Lew Grade, talking about the film 'Raise the Titanic')

'I love it when someone insults me. That means that I don't have to be nice.'
(Billy Idol)

'We owe it to each other - and to our children and grandchildren - to leave our planet in a better state than when we found it.'
(Christopher Dodd)

'I find it very offensive when the government tells me what I can and cannot watch.'
(Michael Badnarik)

'It is not good to be too free. It is not good to have everything one wants.'
(Blaise Pascal)

participle clauses

Participles (*-ing* and *-ed* forms) can introduce clauses (without conjunctions). This is rather formal, and is more common in writing than in speech.

Looking out of the window, Harry saw that it was snowing again.

Knowing what he was like, I was careful to be polite.

Not being a very sociable person, he found a seat where he could be by himself.

Alice had a violent row with Peter, completely ruining the evening.

Having found what I was looking for, I went back home.

Stored in a cool place, this bread will last for weeks.

1 Rewrite the sentences with participle clauses.

1 As I didn't want to upset everybody, I said nothing.

2 On Friday George arrived, and brought news from the Irish cousins.

3 The dog rushed round the room, and broke one priceless ornament after another.

4 As I knew what he liked, I sent him a large bouquet of orchids.

5 If it is fried in butter, it should taste delicious.

6 A train caught fire near Oxford, and caused long delays.

7 As I was not in a hurry, I stopped for a coffee and a sandwich.

8 As he had lost all his money, he had no way of getting home.
Having.....

2 GRAMMAR IN A TEXT. Put the participles from the box into the text.

belonging checking getting protected provided satisfied shooting
sipping stolen stopping walking watching

Carson was sitting comfortably in the deep leather armchair that had belonged to his father, ¹..... his drink and ²..... a rather bad comedy programme. As he relaxed into the evening, a black saloon, ³..... earlier from outside a hotel in Kensington and immediately ⁴..... with new licence plates, drifted slowly down the street outside his house. It was a street of big houses, ⁵..... by tall hedges and well-kept gardens, and obviously ⁶..... to people with few money worries. This was the driver's third time round, ⁷..... for pedestrians, people in parked cars, or any other possible witnesses. Finally ⁸....., he pulled over to the side of the road, ⁹..... just outside Carson's driveway, and switched off the engine. The doors opened at once, all four of them ¹⁰..... out, Henry ¹¹..... out the nearest street light with a silenced .22 as they did so. They moved quickly into the driveway, Marco first, Pepe last, ¹²..... backwards to make sure no one was watching, and went quietly up to the front door.

'misrelated' participles The subject of a participle clause is normally the same as the subject of the main clause, and it is generally considered incorrect to mix subjects, at least in formal writing. Compare:

Standing by the window, Sue gazed at the mountains. (Sue stood; Sue gazed)

Standing by the window, the mountains seemed very close.

(This sounds as if the mountains were standing by the window.)

However, mixed subjects are common when one of them is *it* or *there*.

Being French, it is surprising that she is such a terrible cook.

Having so little time, there was not much that I could do.

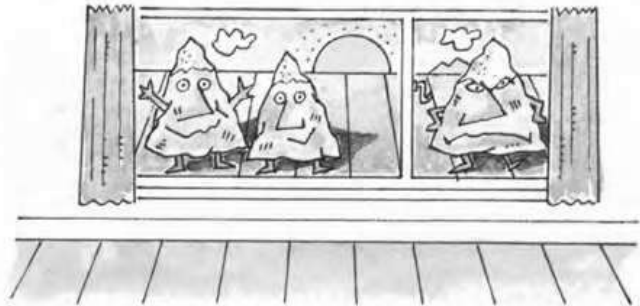
This also happens with some fixed expressions describing the speaker's attitude (e.g. *generally speaking, judging from ..., considering ..., taking everything into consideration.*)

Generally speaking, men can run faster than women.

Judging from his expression, he was in a bad mood.

3 Circle the best continuation.

- 1 Getting out of the car, *Mrs Perkins / the pavement* ...
- 2 Working late at night, *a noise / Josie* ...
- 3 Starting German lessons, *the verbs / I* ...
- 4 Looking out of the window, *Sandra / a taxi* ...
- 5 Sitting in the front row at the circus, *an elephant / the children* ...
- 6 Waking up suddenly, *I / a smell of burning* ...



'Standing by the window, the mountains seem very close.'

4 Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- 1 Considering everything, the holiday was a success. ...
- 2 Running up the stairs, my wallet fell out of my pocket. ...
- 3 Brushing her teeth, a thought suddenly occurred to her. ...
- 4 Generally speaking, children don't like green vegetables. ...
- 5 Looking under the bed, I found a book that I'd lost. ...
- 6 Being short of time, the housework didn't get done. ...

own subject If necessary, a participle clause can have its own subject.

Nobody having anything more to say, the meeting broke up.

Hands held high, the dancers circle to the left.

5 Add subjects from the box.

her doll her smile smoke the fire the school hall the treasurer

- 1 having gone out, the room began to feel quite cold.
- 2 A little girl walked past, dragging behind her on the pavement.
- 3 A car roared round the corner, pouring from the exhaust.
- 4 being much too small, the concert was held outside.
- 5 fixed in place as if with glue, the Princess distributed the prizes.
- 6 having finished his report, questions were invited from the members.

after ...ing, on ...ing etc

Some conjunctions and prepositions can introduce participle clauses.

After waiting for two hours I gave up and went home.

Check the mirror before driving off.

I've learnt a lot since coming here.

Always wear gloves when working with chemicals.

I find it difficult to read while travelling.

In deciding to spend a year studying Arabic, I made a very wise decision.

On doing something (formal) means 'when/as soon as you do something.'

On hearing the fire alarm, go straight to the nearest exit.

1 Complete the sentences with *before*, *after* or *since* and words from the box.

Use *-ing* forms.

abandon analyse apply qualify rearrange sign

- the powder, Dr Fisher reported that it was poisonous.
- spending hours the furniture, I put it all back where it was before.
- for that job, take a careful look at the conditions of work.
- as an accountant, Rachel hasn't actually done a day's work.
- a contract, always look carefully at the small print.
- the ship, the crew spent three days in an open boat.

2 Put in words from the box. (Different answers may be possible.)

after before before besides in on on since when while

- I've heard nothing sending in the application.
- arriving at the airport, you should go directly to the check-in desk.
- They met studying in Germany.
- twisting his ankle, he also cracked a rib.
- Please check the lights locking up.
- Keep the room well ventilated using this product.
- being introduced, British people often shake hands.
- I usually read in bed for a bit putting the light out.
- I never want to work going out for lunch.
- agreeing to sign a three-year contract, Patrick made a serious mistake.

3 Complete this sentence about yourself.

After finishing my studies, I

Note: A few conjunctions (e.g. *until*, *when*, *if*) can introduce clauses with past participles.

Keep stirring until cooked. When arrested, he confessed at once.

If asked, say nothing. Once deprived of oxygen, they die within minutes.

For *by ...ing* used to talk about methods (e.g. *You won't get rich by writing poetry*), see page 194.

'On first entering an underground train,
it is customary to shake hands with
every passenger.'
(R J Phillips: *misleading advice for tourists*)

infinitive clauses

infinitive clauses of purpose are often constructed with *in order* and *so as* in a formal style.
Compare:

I moved house to be nearer to my work. (normal)

I moved house in order to be / so as to be nearer my work. (more formal)

These structures are very common with negative infinitives of purpose.

I moved house so as not to be too far from my work.

(more normal than *I moved house not to be too far from my work.*)

1 Why might you do the following? Give possible reasons, using *so as (not) to* or *in order (not) to*.

- ▶ lock your house *so as not to be burgled*
- 1 wear a raincoat
- 2 put an extra blanket on your bed
- 3 get a dog
- 4 buy a map
- 5 write down a phone number
- 6 set your alarm clock
- 7 join a club
- 8 go to a gym
- 9 stop eating chocolate
- 10 buy a bicycle

(only) to find ... Infinitive clauses can be used to say what somebody **learnt** or **found out** at the end of a journey or task.

I arrived home to find that the house had been burgled.

The idea of surprise can be emphasised with *only*.

He spent four years studying geology, only to discover that there were no jobs.

2 Write your own continuation for one or more of these sentences, using *(only) to find/discover/learn/realise*.

- He arrived at his girlfriend's house,
- I spoke to them carefully in French,
- She opened the parcel with great excitement,
- We arrived at the address on the invitation,
- I opened the door of my room,

To see/hear ... can be used to give the reason for a false impression.

To hear her talk, you'd think she was made of money.

To see her look at him, you'd never realise that she hates him.

3 Write your own continuation for one or more of these sentences.

- To see them together, you'd think
- To read the advertisement, you'd think
- To see him playing tennis, you'd never guess
- To hear him talk,