

Like gerunds, the nominal infinitives can function in all the positions noun phrases generally hold:

My cousin wants to be an underwater welder. (direct object)

Tracy's ambition is to raise organic vegetables. (subject complement)

She achieved her goal: to graduate in three years. (appositive)

EXERCISE 26

Underline the gerunds and infinitives in the following sentences. Identify the function of each nominal verb phrase. You might want to refer to the sentence patterns in Chapter 2 to refresh your memory.

1. The best thing would be to tell the truth. DO
2. By remaining silent, he was actually making the situation worse. PN
3. To ignore the doctor's advice would be foolhardy. S_{as}
4. Ms. Graham chose to welcome the new investor into the company. DO
5. This invitation thwarted his latest plan, to buy up a controlling number of stocks. ~~NP~~ APP
6. Raising the company's national profile was the new owner's long-term goal. S_{as}
7. I appreciate your proofreading this final version for me. DO
8. The baby's crying upset the rest of the passengers. S_{as}

NOMINAL CLAUSES

One of the most common nominal clauses is the one introduced by *that*, known in this role as a nominalizer:

He knew that I was right.

The CEO announced that he was retiring.

You can see in these examples that we have taken a complete sentence and used it as the direct object in another sentence:

I was right.

He was retiring.

As you learned in Chapter 4, nominal clauses, as well as the clauses functioning as adjectivals and adverbials, are all dependent clauses. Any sentence with a dependent clause is called a complex sentence.

EXERCISE 27

Underline the nominal clauses in the following sentences. Identify the function of each: subject, direct object, or appositive.

1. Biologists point out that birds and humans are both "sight animals." DO
 2. With binocular vision our ancestors knew when they should take refuge in trees. DO
 3. That birds fly higher and faster than primates can leap is obvious. SCS
 4. Do you know why the eyes of hawks evolved to function like telescopes? DO
 5. The idea that birds cock their heads to improve depth perception APP is widely accepted.
 6. When biologists wondered whether hummingbirds can see ultraviolet light, they studied the flowers these birds frequent. APP
-

NOMINALS AS DELAYED SUBJECTS

The nominal *that* clauses functioning as subjects have a formal quality more characteristic of writing than speech:

That the common cold is caused by a virus has been clearly established.

That Marie dropped out of school was a shock to us all.

In conversation, or prose meant to sound conversational, we are more likely to delay the information in the opening clause by substituting the pronoun *it* for the subject—called the anticipatory *it*:

It has been clearly established that the common cold is caused by a virus.

It was a shock to us all that Marie dropped out of school.