

Reported Clause with Wh-words

1. ~~A I realized what **would life be** like without friends.~~

1. B I realized what **life would be** like without friends.

2. ~~A She guessed **who I** wanted and offered to help me get it.~~

2. B She guessed **what** I wanted and offered to help me get it.

3. ~~A They've discovered **who's** incompetence ruined the company.~~

3. B They've discovered **whose** incompetence ruined the company.

4. A The shopkeeper asked **what** material she preferred, ~~silk or cotton.~~

4. B The shopkeeper asked **which** material she preferred, silk or cotton.

Grammar Points

1. We use a clause beginning with a wh-word to report a wh-question. But we use the word order for a statement, not a question, in the reported clause.

EXAMPLES:

The results of the viewers' survey revealed **who the most popular actor was .** ✓

Diagram: The reported clause "who the most popular actor was ." is analyzed. "who" is the subject and "was" is the verb. The word order is subject-verb, which is the correct statement order for a reported clause.

The results of the viewers' survey revealed **who was the most popular actor.** ✗

Diagram: The reported clause "who was the most popular actor." is analyzed. "who" is the subject and "was" is the verb. The word order is verb-subject, which is the incorrect question order for a reported clause.

The manager asked Jason **why he was late.** ✓

Diagram: The reported clause "why he was late." is analyzed. "he" is the subject and "was" is the verb. The word order is subject-verb, which is the correct statement order for a reported clause.

The manager asked Jason **why was he late.** ✗

Diagram: The reported clause "why was he late." is analyzed. "he" is the subject and "was" is the verb. The word order is verb-subject, which is the incorrect question order for a reported clause.

Grammar Points

2. We must use the appropriate wh-word to begin the reported clause, depending on whether we are referring to a person, thing, place, time, reason, etc.

EXAMPLES:

The results of the viewers' survey revealed **who** the most popular actor was . ✓

reported clause

subject verb

The results of the viewers' survey revealed **who** was the most popular actor. ✗

reported clause

verb subject

The manager asked Jason **why** he was late. ✓

reported clause

subject verb

The manager asked Jason **why** was he late. ✗

reported clause

verb subject

EXAMPLES:

I know **who** you are trying to impress.

referring to a person

reported clause

I know **what** you are trying to prove.

referring to a thing

reported clause

REMEMBER!

■ These are some common wh-words:

wh-word	refers to
who	a person
what	a thing
where	a place
when	a time
why	a reason
how	a manner

EXAMPLES:

They've established **where** the crime was committed.

They've established **when** the crime was committed.

They've established **why** the crime was committed.

They've established **how** the crime was committed.

3

We use a clause beginning with **whose** + noun to refer to a relationship such as ownership or a connection between the noun and the subject of the reported clause.

EXAMPLE:

He's just learnt **whose** signature that is.

referring to ownership

reported clause