

GRAMMAR

Cleft sentences

LEVEL

Intermediate (B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_3092G

LANGUAGE

English

Learning outcomes

- I can recognise cleft sentences and understand when they are used.
- I can correctly form cleft sentences starting with *It* and *What*.



Warm-up

Write answers to the questions below into the chat.

Ask a classmate a follow-up question about one of their answers.



My English teacher inspired me to...

Ooh, just three words? That's tough...

What are some interesting or unusual facts about your hometown or city?

What do you like about learning a language online?

Think of a person who has inspired you to do something.

What words would you use to describe your best friend's most positive traits?



You will revisit this activity later in the lesson.

Cleft sentences

We use cleft sentences to **emphasise** a particular part of a sentence.

Read two versions of a sentence below. The second one is a cleft sentence.

How is it different? What is being emphasized?



He's a good candidate for this role because he can react to problems quickly and effectively.

It's his ability to react to problems quickly and effectively that makes him a good candidate for this role.

Cleft sentences: form and use

Read the example sentences and the explanation in the blue box.

It was my secretary who sent you the email.

What I need is a good night's sleep.

- Notice the **structure** of the sentences:
It was... who...
What I... is...
- The information to be emphasized goes after the verb **to be**

- In the 1st sentence, emphasis is on the person who sent the email. Perhaps the speaker wants to **clarify** a misunderstanding regarding the sender → *It was my secretary (not me)*
- In the 2nd sentence, emphasis is on the thing the speaker needs. Structuring it like this **adds strength** to the statement, suggesting that the speaker is very tired



Cleft = **divided** or split

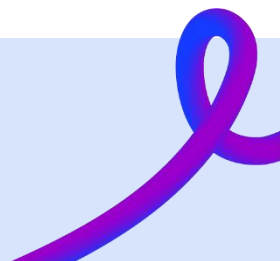
Cleft sentences have two parts, or **clauses**.



What I really need right now is...



What do you think this person might need?
Complete the phrase so that it's true for you!





Uses of cleft sentences

Match the sentences (1-4) to a description (a-d).

1 It was the shop with the red door that we bought the chocolates from.

2 What I meant was that we should be careful who we ask to the surprise party.

3 It's the company that should pay for travel expenses, not the employee.

4 What would make me happy is a hearty, homecooked meal.

a **Clarify** a misunderstanding

b **Contrast** two ideas

c **Identify** a person or thing

d **Strengthen** a statement



Complete the sentences

Start the sentence with *It/What*.

Complete the sentence with the correct word from the box.

1 _____ we need is more _____ to finish the project.

2 _____ I would _____ right now is a cup of tea to warm me up!

3 _____'s her _____ to detail that makes her one of the best interior designers in the business!

4 _____ you need is a nice _____. You haven't taken time off in ages.

5 _____ was the _____ that made me feel ill, not the food.

attention
heat
vacation
time
love



Where is the emphasis?

What information is **emphasised** in each sentence below? **Share** your ideas.

1



What we're trying to figure out is why this app is suddenly so popular.

2



It was my friend Jill who introduced me to this song.

3



What I value most in our friendship is honesty.

4



It's the view from the balcony that makes this place special.



Cleft sentences with *It*

Read the example sentences again. **Complete** the blue boxes.

It's the view from the balcony > **that** makes this place special.

It was my friend Jill > **who** showed me the song.

- In cleft sentences starting with ***It***, the words to be emphasized go at the start (in the introductory clause).

- Use ***It*** + ***is***/____ + the specific person or thing you want to emphasise.
- Use a **relative pronoun** (e.g.____/____) in the following clause.



Transform the sentences

Rewrite these sentences as cleft sentences using *It*.

1 My sister gave me this dress.



It was my sister who gave me this dress.

2 His sense of humour makes him so fun to be around.



3 I love the additional features in this car, like the heated seats.



4 They first met in this park, years ago.



5 He's very patient and this is why he's such a great teacher.



6 The heavy rains caused the flooding.



Cleft sentences starting with *What*

Read the example sentences again. **Complete** the blue boxes.

What we're trying to figure out **>** **is** why this app is suddenly so popular.

What I value most in our friendship **>** **is** honesty.

- In cleft sentences starting with **What**, the emphasised words go at the end of the sentence.

- Use **What** + _____ + **verb** in the introductory clause.
- Use the verb **to** ____ in the next clause, followed by the information you want to **emphasise**.



Transform the sentences

Rewrite these sentences as cleft sentences using **What**.

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 | The show is very exciting. There are lots of plot twists. | > | <i>What makes the show exciting is the plot twists.</i> | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 2 | The secret ingredient gives this cake its lovely flavour. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 3 | We need more time to finish the project. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 4 | I'm trying to say that I want us to be more than friends. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 5 | The high ceilings and big windows make this flat seem so spacious. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |
| 6 | I want us to work together as a team, not just focus on our individual tasks. | > | | <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> |





Complete the cleft sentences

Use cleft sentences to **rephrase** your answers to the questions on p.3.

It's _____ that
makes my hometown
unique.

What I enjoy about
learning a language
online is...

It was _____
who inspired me
to...

What I value most in a
friendship is...



Strengthening a statement

Create a cleft sentence to strengthen each statement. You can be as creative as you like. Work in pairs **in breakout rooms** then **share** the sentences with the class.

It's the experience of immersing myself in new cultures that makes traveling my favourite hobby.



I like to travel

I prefer watching movies
from home

Grandmother's cooking is
the best

Dogs are special animals

Roleplay these scenarios

Work with a partner to **roleplay short dialogues** based on the scenarios below. Try to have **at least one** cleft sentence in each dialogue.



A co-worker accuses Sarah of taking credit for a project that she didn't work on.

Miguel is late to the park to meet his friend. They disagree about the meeting time.

There has been a miscommunication about a project deadline between two co-workers.

Deepa hasn't received her package, but the delivery company say that they went to the right apartment.



End of the lesson

Idiom

Put emphasis on

Meaning: to give special importance or attention to something

Example: In this presentation, we need to put emphasis on the key benefits of our product in order to convince potential customers to buy it.



Additional practice



Cleft sentences: recap

1 In cleft sentences starting with *What*, the emphasised words go at the _____ of the sentence.

a. start

b. end

2 In cleft sentences starting with *It*, the words to be emphasised go at the _____ of the sentence (in the introductory clause).

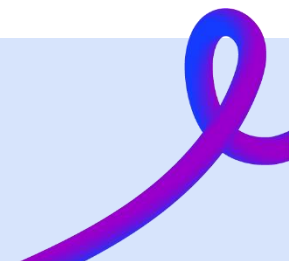
a. start

b. end

3 The information to be emphasised goes after the verb _____.

a. to be

b. to want

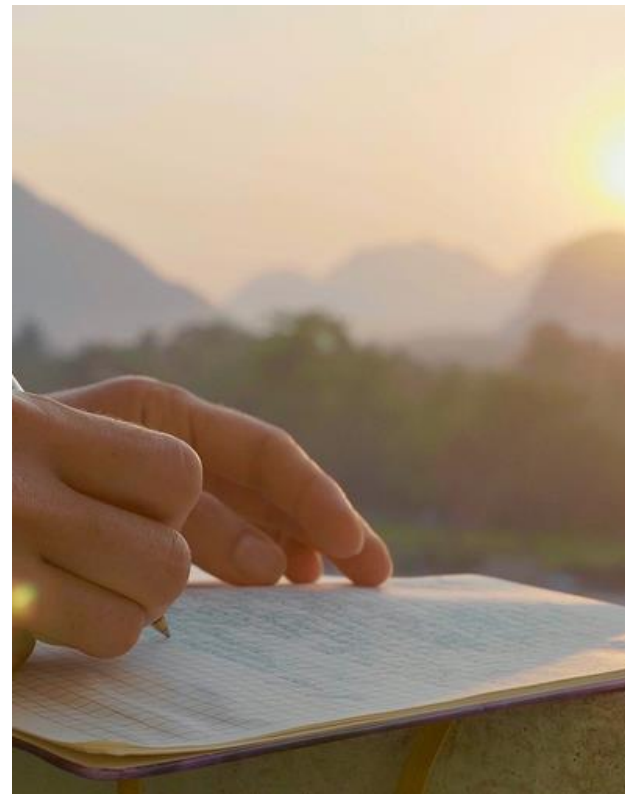




Describe a trip

Think about a trip that you enjoyed a lot...

Use cleft sentences to identify the people or things that helped to make it such a good holiday.



Ex.

It was the long walks in the fresh sea air that made me feel like new person by the end of the weekend!

Answer key

P.7: 1. c 2. a 3. b 4. d

P.8: 1. What, time 2. What, love 3. It's, attention 4. What, vacation 5. It, heat

P.9: 1. the sudden popularity of the app 2. the person (Jill) 3. the quality (honesty) that is most valued by the speaker 4. the view

P.11: Cleft sentences with It

2. It's his sense of humour that makes him so fun to be around.

3. It's the additional features in this car that I love, like the heated seats. /It's the heated seats that I love.

4. It was in this park that they first met, years ago.

5. It's his patience that makes him such a good teacher.

6. It was the heavy rains that caused the flooding.

P.12: what + pronoun, to be

P.13:

2. What gives this cake its lovely flavour is the secret ingredient.

3. What we need is more time to finish the project

4. What I'm trying to say is that I want us to be more than friends.

5. What makes this flat seem so spacious is the high ceilings and big windows.

6. What I want is for us to work together as a team, not just focus on our individual tasks.

P.20: 1. b 2. a 3. a



Summary

Cleft sentences review:

- We use cleft sentences to **emphasize** a particular part of a sentence.
- Cleft = **divided** or split. Cleft sentences have two parts, or **clauses**.

Uses of cleft sentences:

- **Clarify** a misunderstanding; **contrast** two ideas
- **Identify** a person or thing; **strengthen** a statement

Cleft sentences with *It*:

- In cleft sentences with ***It***, the words to be emphasized go at the **start** (in the introductory clause).
- Use ***It* + *is/was*** + the specific person or thing you want to emphasize.
- Use a **relative pronoun** (e.g. ***that/who***) in the following clause.

Cleft sentences with *What*:

- In cleft sentences with ***What***, the emphasized words go at the **end** of the sentence.
- Use ***What* + subject + verb** in the introductory clause.
- Use the verb ***to be*** in the next clause, followed by the information you want to **emphasize**



Vocabulary

What I really need right now is...

