



# EMPHATIC STRUCTURES: CLEFT SENTENCES

Cleft means divided. In a cleft sentence, information which could be given in one clause is divided into two parts, each with its own verb. This way you give extra emphasis to part of the sentence

It was Tom who didn't want to come.

**It Cleft sentences:**  
**IT + BE (+ NOT AND/OR ADVERB) + EMPHASISED WORD/PHRASE + THAT (WHO) CLAUSE**

SENTENCE	Mike took Sally to the party on Saturday.
EMPHASIS ON THE SUBJECT	It was Mike who took Sally to the party on Saturday.
EMPHASIS ON THE OBJECT	It was Sally that Mike took to the party on Saturday.
EMPHASIS ON THE ADVERBIAL	It was on Saturday that Mike took Sally to the party.
EMPHASIS ON THE PREP. PHRASE	It was to the party that Mike took Sally on Saturday.

**WH- cleft sentences:**  
**WH- Clause + BE + EMPHASISED WORD / PHRASE**

EMPHASIS ON THE ACTION	What Mike did was (to) take Sally to the party
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In these sentences **WHAT** means **THE THING(S) THAT**. The WH-clause must contain a verb. To highlight the action we use a form of **DO** in the WH-clause. The highlighted phrase usually contains a bare infinitive or **TO + INF**.

If the highlighted verb is in the continuous or perfect, the form of **DO** matches it.

*The boys are taking Sandy to the match* → *What the boys are doing is taking Sandy to the match.*

## Other cleft sentences

*The thing that I most disliked was the colour of her dress.*

*The only thing I won't do is phone her again.*

*All you need is love.*

# EMPHATIC STRUCTURES: CLEFT SENTENCES

## EXERCISES

READ THE INFORMATION IN THE BOX THEN COMPLETE THE REPLIES. EACH REPLY MUST CONTAIN A CLEFT SENTENCE.

Nick turned up late for work on Monday because he got stuck in a traffic jam on the ring road. Luckily Nick has a mobile phone so he was able to phone his boss and warn her that he would be late. She was furious but managed to reschedule an important meeting for the afternoon.

1. Nick was late because he overslept, wasn't he?

No, it \_\_\_\_\_ that he was late.

2. How on earth did Nick let the boss know he'd be late?

Well, what \_\_\_\_\_ call her from his mobile phone.

3. Wasn't Nick late on Wednesday?

No, \_\_\_\_\_ that he was late.

4. Nick's boss had to start the meeting without him, didn't she?

No, what she \_\_\_\_\_ the afternoon.

5. Didn't Nick get stuck in a traffic jam in the town centre?

No, not in the town centre; it \_\_\_\_\_ got stuck.

6. I heard the boss was a little annoyed with Nick for being late.

No, she wasn't "a little annoyed". What \_\_\_\_\_!

FOR EACH OF THE SENTENCES BELOW, WRITE A NEW SENTENCE AS SIMILAR AS POSSIBLE IN MEANING TO THE ORIGINAL SENTENCE, BUT USING THE WORDS GIVEN IN BOLD.

1. We just need 5 minutes to fix it. **ALL**

\_\_\_\_\_

2. I'm not questioning his dedication. **ISN'T**

\_\_\_\_\_

3. These men are totally ruthless. **WHAT**

\_\_\_\_\_

4. We inherited everything except the house. **ONLY THING**

\_\_\_\_\_

5. You know the sales assistant told me exactly the same thing. **THAT'S**

\_\_\_\_\_

6. We're taking the au-pair with us. **DOING**

\_\_\_\_\_

# EMPHATIC STRUCTURES: CLEFT SENTENCES

## EXERCISES KEY

READ THE INFORMATION IN THE BOX THEN COMPLETE THE REPLIES. EACH REPLY MUST CONTAIN A CLEFT SENTENCE.

1. Nick was late because he overslept, wasn't he?  
No, it WAS BECAUSE OF THE TRAFFIC JAM that he was late.
2. How on earth did Nick let the boss know he'd be late?  
Well, what HE DID WAS (TO) call her from his mobile phone.
3. Wasn't Nick late on Wednesday?  
No, IT WAS ON MONDAY that he was late.
4. Nick's boss had to start the meeting without him, didn't she?  
No, what she DID WAS (TO) RESCHEDULE THE MEETING FOR the afternoon.
5. Didn't Nick get stuck in a traffic jam in the town centre?  
No, not in the town centre; it WAS ON THE RING ROAD THAT NICK got stuck.
6. I heard the boss was a little annoyed with Nick for being late.  
No, she wasn't "a little annoyed". What SHE WAS WAS FURIOUS!

FOR EACH OF THE SENTENCES BELOW, WRITE A NEW SENTENCE AS SIMILAR AS POSSIBLE IN MEANING TO THE ORIGINAL SENTENCE, BUT USING THE WORDS GIVEN IN BOLD.

1. We just need 5 minutes to fix it. **ALL**  
ALL WE NEED IS 5 MINUTES (TO FIX IT)
2. I'm not questioning his dedication. **ISN'T**  
IT ISN'T HIS DEDICATION THAT I'M QUESTIONING.
3. These men are totally ruthless. **WHAT**  
WHAT THESE MEN ARE IS TOTALLY RUTHLESS.
4. We inherited everything except the house. **ONLY THING**  
THE ONLY THING WE DIDN'T INHERIT WAS THE HOUSE.
5. You know the sales assistant told me exactly the same thing. **THAT'S**  
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THE SALES ASSISTANT TOLD ME.
6. We're taking the au-pair with us. **DOING**  
WHAT WE ARE DOING IS TAKING THE AU-PAIR WITH US.