

Noun clause markers

Recognizing a noun clause isn't all that difficult. They are usually introduced by the conjunctions *that*, *if* or *whether*. Noun clauses can also be introduced by question words (e.g. *how*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *which*, *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *why*) and words ending in *-ever* (e.g. *whatever*, *whenever*, *wherever* etc.)

I don't know *why* she dislikes me.

Whoever said that was right.

I don't know *whether* she will come.

He told me that he was quitting.

What he said infuriated me.

I don't know *how* she managed to do it.

A clause that comes immediately after a verb is usually a noun clause. Some verbs that are commonly followed by noun clauses are: *know*, *understand*, *tell*, *say*, *remember*, *suggest*, *propose*, *request*, *order* etc.

Indirect questions are also noun clauses.

I want to know *when* you intend to start.

She will not tell me *what* her name is.

Yes / No Questions

Yes/no questions (questions that expect either *yes* or *no* as an answer) are also noun clauses. Note that *yes/no* questions are usually introduced by the prepositions *if* or *whether*.

I would like to know *if* you are interested in coming with me.

Note that you cannot decide whether a clause is a noun clause or not just by looking at the word used to introduce it.

The words that are typically used to introduce clauses can also be used to introduce adjective clauses and adverb clauses. And this can sometimes be quite confusing. Therefore, instead of looking at the clause marker, students should analyze what the clause does in a sentence. If it serves as the subject or object of a verb, then it has got to be a noun clause.