



CLEFT SENTENCES

A **cleft sentence** is a sentence in which some part is moved from its normal position into a different place to give it more emphasis. Sometimes there's a particular part of a sentence that you really want to stress. It might be because it's new information or because it's the most interesting or important part of a sentence. One way of giving emphasis is by changing the structure of a sentence and using something called a **cleft sentence**.

I. 'What' cleft sentences

You can use a 'what' cleft to draw attention to the most interesting or important part. Compare these sentences:

Normal sentence structure

- *We got to our hotel and realised that our room had been double booked.*
- *They moved us to a different hotel.*
- *He offered us another week there for free.*

With emphasis using 'what'

- *What happened was we got to the hotel and realised that our room had been double booked.*
- *What they did was move us to another hotel.*
- *What he did was offer us another week there for free.*

1. Structure - Emphasising the noun

What + understood information + is/was + emphasis

- *What I hated most was the insects everywhere.*

2. Structure - Emphasising the verb

What/All + subject + do/does/did + is/was + verb

- *What they did was move us to another town.*

3. Structure - Emphasising the whole sentence

What happens/happened + is/was + clause

- *What happened was we got to the hotel and realised that our room had been double booked.*

* Cleft sentences with *what*

3 Read what these people say about Lovely. Rewrite the comments.

- 1 I don't understand how anyone can just start their own country.
What I don't understand is how anyone can just start their own country.
- 2 Lovely has a bigger population than some 'real' countries. It's amazing.
What's _____
- 3 Wallace's visit to Death Row sounds weird.
What I find _____
- 4 The first thing I'd do with a new country is make myself president.
What I'd _____
- 5 He wasn't accepted into the United Nations. That's the disappointing thing.
What's _____
- 6 I think people should stop inventing new countries and concentrate on making things better in the real ones.
What I think _____

II. 'It' cleft sentences

You can use an 'it' cleft to draw attention to the most interesting or important part. Compare these two sentences:

- *Rob ate my biscuits.*
- *It was Rob that ate my biscuits*

In the second sentence, we are focussing on the fact that Rob did this. It wasn't another person.

Structure

It + is/was + emphasis + (that) + rest of message

- *It was Rob that/who ate my biscuits.* (not Catherine)
- *It was my biscuits that Rob ate.* (not my sandwiches)
- *It was yesterday that Rob ate my biscuits.* (not today)

We can also use this structure in the present tense:

- *It is me that/who does all the work.*

b Put the words in order to make replies.

- 1 A: So you're saying you don't believe the government.
B: that / government / I'm / what / is / No / I / trust / saying / the / don't
No, what I'm saying is that I don't trust the government.
- 2 A: Did Donna tell you?
B: it / Jim / was / told / No / us / who
- 3 A: So you were confused by the film.
B: film / what / of / confused / the / No / was / ending / the / me
- 4 A: And then she said some things that upset you?
B: upset / was / No / didn't / me / things / the / what / she / say
- 5 A: Didn't Jim fail his driving test?
B: No / failed / it / his / who / brother / was / it
- 6 A: Did you find the listening test difficult?
B: I / what / exam / difficult / found / was / No / written / the

