

When we want to focus attention on or emphasize one part of a sentence, we can do this by adding certain words or phrases to the beginning of the sentence. This is sometimes called a 'cleft sentence'.

More emphatic sentence

1 beginning with *What* or *All*

I need a coffee.	What I need is a coffee.
I don't like the weather here.	What I don't like here is the weather.
I just want to travel.	All I want is to travel.
I only touched it!	All I did was touch it.

2 beginning with *What happens is...* / *What happened was...*

You do a test and then you have an interview.	What happens is (that) you do a test and then you have an interview.
We left our passports at home.	What happened was (that) we left our passports at home.

3 beginning with *The person who...*, *The place where...*, *The first / last time...*, *The reason why...*, etc.

I spoke to the manager.	The person (who / that) I spoke to was the manager.
We stayed in a five-star hotel.	The place where we stayed was a five-star hotel.
I last saw him on Saturday.	The last time I saw him was on Saturday.
I bought it because it was cheap.	The reason (why / that) I bought it was that / because it was cheap.

4 beginning with *It*

A boy in my class won the prize.	It was a boy in my class who won the prize.
We had the meeting last Friday.	It was last Friday when we had the meeting.
They charged us extra for the wine.	It was the wine (that) they charged us extra for.

- 1 We can make some kinds of sentences more emphatic by beginning with *What* (= the thing) or *All* (= the only thing) + clause + *be*, and then the part of the sentence we want to emphasize.
- 2 To emphasize an event or sequence of events, we can begin with *What happens is (that)...* / *What happened was (that)...*
- 3 We can also make part of a sentence more emphatic by beginning with an expression like *The person who...*, *The place where...*, *The first / last time that...*, *The reason why...*, etc. + clause + *be*, with the emphasized part of the sentence at the end.
- 4 We can also use *It is / was* + the emphasized part of the sentence + a relative clause.

⚠ If the emphasized part is a pronoun, we normally use the object pronoun after *it is / was*, e.g. *It was me who paid the bill.* NOT *It was I who paid the bill.*

a Complete the sentences with one word.

The last time I saw my brother was at his 40th birthday party.

- 1 _____ was my father who told me not to marry him.
- 2 _____ I hate about Sundays is knowing you have to work the next day.
- 3 The _____ why I want you to come early is so that we can have some time on our own before the others arrive.
- 4 After you've sent in your CV, what _____ next is that you get called for an interview.
- 5 It's not my fault you can't find them! _____ I did was tidy up your desk a bit.
- 6 The _____ where we're going to have lunch is a sort of artist's café near the theatre.
- 7 _____ happened was that I lost the piece of paper with my flight details on it.
- 8 It was _____ who told Angela about the party. I'm terribly sorry. I didn't know you hadn't invited her.

b Rewrite the sentences with the **bold** word.

I only need a small piece of paper.

ALL

All I need is a small piece of paper.

- 1 She left her husband because he cheated on her.
REASON
_____ he cheated on her.
- 2 We stopped in an absolutely beautiful place for lunch.
PLACE
_____ was absolutely beautiful.
- 3 We got stuck in an enormous traffic jam.
HAPPENED
_____ we got stuck in an enormous traffic jam.
- 4 They didn't apologize for arriving late, which really annoyed me.
WHAT
_____ they didn't apologize for arriving late.
- 5 A girl from my town won the silver medal.
IT
_____ won the silver medal.

- 6 I only said that I didn't like her dress.
ALL
_____ that I didn't like her dress.
- 7 I like my Aunt Emily best of all my relatives.
PERSON
_____ is my Aunt Emily.
- 8 You pick up your tickets at the box office.
HAPPENS
_____ you pick up your tickets at the box office.
- 9 Right now you need to sit down and put your feet up.
WHAT
_____ to sit down and put your feet up.
- 10 I first met Serena at a conference in Berlin.
TIME
_____ at a conference in Berlin.