

Noun clauses

Examine the groups of italicized words in the following sentences.

I expect *to get the first prize*. (Expect what?)

I expect *that I will get the first prize*. (Expect what?)

Here the first group of words 'to get the first prize' makes sense, but not complete sense. It does not have a subject or predicate of its own. It is therefore a phrase. And because this phrase is the object of the verb expect it does the work of a noun. In other words it is a noun phrase.

Now consider the second group of words 'that I will get the first prize'. It has a subject and a predicate of its own. It is therefore a clause. And because it is the object of the verb expect, it does the work of a noun. Therefore we call it a noun clause.

Now study the following sentence.

That she should forget me so quickly was rather a shock.

Here the noun clause 'that she should forget me so quickly' is the subject of the verb was.

More examples of noun clauses are given below:

She asked me *what I was doing*. (Object of the verb asked)

He said *that he would not come*. (Object of the verb said)

No one knows *who he is*. (Object of the verb knows)

That you should say this is rather strange. (Subject of the verb is)

I don't know *what he wants*. (Object of the verb know)