

Cleft Sentences in English

Extensive Practice Worksheet for B2-C1 Learners

It-clefts / What-clefts / Reverse clefts / All-clefts / Exam-style transformations

Name	Date	Level	Score
_____	_____	_____	_____

Teacher note: This worksheet is designed for learners preparing for B2 First, C1 Advanced or upper-intermediate/advanced writing. It can be used after a grammar lesson on cleft sentences, or as revision before exam writing and transformation practice.

Learning aims:

- recognise the main types of cleft sentences
- rewrite simple sentences using cleft structures
- use cleft sentences naturally in writing and speaking
- avoid common mistakes with it-clefts, what-clefts and all-clefts

Quick Grammar Review

Cleft sentences help us emphasise one part of a sentence. They are useful when we want to correct information, create contrast, add style, or make writing sound more advanced.

Type	Structure	Example
It-cleft	It + be + emphasised part + who/that + clause	It was Anna who solved the problem.
What-cleft	What + clause + be + emphasised part	What I need is more time.
Reverse cleft	Emphasised part + be + what + clause	More time is what I need.
All-cleft	All + clause + be + emphasised part	All I want is a clear answer.
The reason/thing/person cleft	The reason/thing/person + clause + be + focus	The reason I left was the noise.

Exercise 1: It-Cleft Sentences

Rewrite each sentence using an it-cleft. Emphasise the person, time, place, reason or thing.

1. Maria organised the charity event.

2. They moved to Bristol in 2020.

3. I met my old classmate at the airport.

4. The heavy rain caused the delay.

5. Everyone trusted him because of his honesty.

6. This article changed my opinion.

7. She realised her mistake after the meeting.

8. My English teacher encouraged me to apply.

9. The truth was revealed in the final chapter.

10. The price put us off buying the flat.

Exercise 2: What-Cleft Sentences

Rewrite each sentence beginning with What. Focus on the thing, idea, action or feeling.

1. I need more time.

2. The ending of the film disappointed her.

3. The company needs a clearer strategy.

4. His confidence impressed me most.

5. Many students fear making mistakes in public.

6. People interrupting during meetings annoys me.

7. The practical examples made the lesson useful.

8. Young people often lack financial education.

9. The sudden change of plan surprised everyone.

10. She wants more independence.

Exercise 3: Reverse Cleft Sentences

Rewrite the sentences using the pattern: Emphasised information + be + what + clause.

1. I need more time.

2. The students wanted a clearer explanation.

3. Regular practice helped him improve.

4. The lack of preparation caused the problem.

5. She needs confidence most.

6. Many workers prefer a more flexible timetable.

7. The final scene made the film memorable.

8. The team needs better communication.

Exercise 4: All-Cleft Sentences

Rewrite each sentence beginning with All. These sentences often express limitation, frustration, or strong focus.

1. I only want a clear answer.

2. They only criticised our proposal.

3. She only needs a little encouragement.

4. We can only wait now.

5. He only asked for another chance.

6. The children only wanted a day off school.

7. I only expected a short explanation.

8. They only have to complete the form.

Exercise 5: The Reason, Thing, Person and Place Clefts

Rewrite each sentence using the word given at the beginning.

1. I left early because of the noise. Begin: The reason...

2. The cost worries me most. Begin: The thing...

3. My neighbour helped me most. Begin: The person...

4. I feel most relaxed in my garden. Begin: The place...

5. She refused the offer because of the salary. Begin: The reason...

6. The service impressed us. Begin: The thing...

7. The director made the final decision. Begin: The person...

8. They first met in a small cafe. Begin: The place...

Exercise 6: Error Correction

Correct the mistakes in the cleft sentences. Some sentences may have more than one possible correction.

1. It was my friend helped me with the project.

2. What I need are a quiet room.

3. All she wanted a sincere apology.

4. It was in the library where I found the book.

5. The reason why he was late was because the traffic.

6. What annoyed me were his behaviour.

7. A better explanation what the students needed.

8. It was because the rain that the match was cancelled.

9. The thing I admire most is her to be patient.

10. All we can do now to wait.

11. It is education which gives people more opportunities.

12. What surprised me it was his honesty.

Exercise 7: Choose the Best Cleft Sentence

Choose the sentence that is grammatically correct and sounds most natural.

1. a) It was my sister who found the wallet.

b) It was my sister found the wallet.

2. a) What I need are a break.

b) What I need is a break.

3. a) All they did was complain.

b) All they did complain.

4. a) It was in 2019 that they bought the house.

b) It was in 2019 they bought the house.

5. a) The reason she left was the noise.

b) The reason she left it was the noise.

6. a) What made me angry was his attitude.

b) What made me angry were his attitude.

7. a) A clearer plan is what the team needs.

b) A clearer plan what the team needs.

8. a) The person who helped me most was my teacher.

b) The person helped me most was my teacher.

Exercise 8: Mixed B2-C1 Transformations

Rewrite each sentence using the beginning given. Keep the meaning the same.

1. My brother broke the vase, not me. Begin: It was...

2. His rude comment made me angry. Begin: What...

3. I realised I had lost my keys only after I got home. Begin: It was only after...

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4. She only wanted a chance to explain. Begin: All...
-
5. The project failed because of poor communication. Begin: The reason...
-
6. Many employees want a better work-life balance. Begin: A better work-life balance...
-
7. We arrived late because of the train strike. Begin: It was because of...
-
8. Accuracy matters most, not speed. Begin: What...
-
9. Mrs Brown inspired me to become a teacher. Begin: The person...
-
10. The manager only repeated the same instructions. Begin: All...
-
11. She discovered her love of art in Paris. Begin: It was...
-
12. The students need more feedback. Begin: What...
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Exercise 9: Complete the Cleft Sentences

Complete each sentence with one suitable word.

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1. It was my uncle _____ taught me how to cook.
2. It was during the summer _____ I finally learned to swim.
3. What worries me most _____ the rising cost of living.
4. All they wanted _____ a fair decision.
5. A quiet room is _____ I need right now.
6. It was because of the fog _____ the flight was delayed.
7. The reason I called you _____ to ask for advice.
8. What impressed everyone _____ her calm reaction.
9. The place _____ I feel happiest is by the sea.
10. Regular revision is what _____ students remember grammar more easily.

Exercise 10: Improve the Paragraph with Cleft Sentences

Rewrite the paragraph. Use at least three cleft sentences to make the writing more varied and emphatic. You may use it-clefts, what-clefts, all-clefts or the reason/thing/person structures.

Original paragraph: Many students struggle with exam writing. They often have good ideas, but they do not organise them clearly. They need more practice with paragraph structure. They also need better examples. Their lack of planning causes most of the problems.

Exercise 11: Short Writing Task

Write a short paragraph of 90-120 words on ONE of the topics below. Use at least three cleft sentences naturally. Do not force them into every sentence.

Topic A: What makes a good teacher?

Topic B: Why do some people prefer online learning?

Topic C: What is the biggest challenge for people learning English?

Answer Key

Possible answers are given. In some exercises, other grammatically correct cleft sentences may also be acceptable.

Exercise 1: It-Cleft Sentences

1. It was Maria who/that organised the charity event.
2. It was in 2020 that they moved to Bristol.
3. It was at the airport that I met my old classmate.
4. It was the heavy rain that caused the delay.
5. It was because of his honesty that everyone trusted him.
6. It was this article that changed my opinion.
7. It was after the meeting that she realised her mistake.
8. It was my English teacher who/that encouraged me to apply.
9. It was in the final chapter that the truth was revealed.
10. It was the price that put us off buying the flat.

Exercise 2: What-Cleft Sentences

1. What I need is more time.
2. What disappointed her was the ending of the film.
3. What the company needs is a clearer strategy.
4. What impressed me most was his confidence.
5. What many students fear is making mistakes in public.
6. What annoys me is people interrupting during meetings.
7. What made the lesson useful was the practical examples.
8. What young people often lack is financial education.
9. What surprised everyone was the sudden change of plan.
10. What she wants is more independence.

Exercise 3: Reverse Cleft Sentences

1. More time is what I need.
2. A clearer explanation is what the students wanted.
3. Regular practice is what helped him improve.
4. The lack of preparation was what caused the problem.
5. Confidence is what she needs most.
6. A more flexible timetable is what many workers prefer.
7. The final scene was what made the film memorable.
8. Better communication is what the team needs.

Exercise 4: All-Cleft Sentences

1. All I want is a clear answer.
2. All they did was criticise our proposal.
3. All she needs is a little encouragement.
4. All we can do now is wait.
5. All he asked for was another chance.
6. All the children wanted was a day off school.
7. All I expected was a short explanation.
8. All they have to do is complete the form.

Exercise 5: The Reason, Thing, Person and Place Clefts

1. The reason I left early was the noise.

2. The thing that worries me most is the cost.
3. The person who helped me most was my neighbour.
4. The place where I feel most relaxed is my garden.
5. The reason she refused the offer was the salary.
6. The thing that impressed us was the service.
7. The person who made the final decision was the director.
8. The place where they first met was a small cafe.

Exercise 6: Error Correction

1. It was my friend who/that helped me with the project.
2. What I need is a quiet room.
3. All she wanted was a sincere apology.
4. It was in the library that I found the book.
5. The reason he was late was the traffic. / It was because of the traffic that he was late.
6. What annoyed me was his behaviour.
7. A better explanation was what the students needed.
8. It was because of the rain that the match was cancelled.
9. The thing I admire most is her patience.
10. All we can do now is wait.
11. It is education that gives people more opportunities.
12. What surprised me was his honesty.

Exercise 7: Choose the Best Cleft Sentence

- 1 a
- 2 b
- 3 a
- 4 a
- 5 a
- 6 a
- 7 a
- 8 a

Exercise 8: Mixed B2-C1 Transformations

1. It was my brother who/that broke the vase, not me.
2. What made me angry was his rude comment.
3. It was only after I got home that I realised I had lost my keys.
4. All she wanted was a chance to explain.
5. The reason the project failed was poor communication.
6. A better work-life balance is what many employees want.
7. It was because of the train strike that we arrived late.
8. What matters most is not speed but accuracy.
9. The person who inspired me to become a teacher was Mrs Brown.
10. All the manager did was repeat the same instructions.
11. It was in Paris that she discovered her love of art.
12. What the students need is more feedback.

Exercise 9: Complete the Cleft Sentences

1. who/that
2. that
3. is

4. was
5. what
6. that
7. was
8. was
9. where
10. helps

Exercise 10: Sample Improved Paragraph

Many students struggle with exam writing, but what causes the biggest problem is not always grammar. What they often need is more practice with paragraph structure and clearer examples. It is the lack of planning that makes their ideas difficult to follow. All many students need is a simple method for organising their thoughts before they start writing.

Exercise 11: Teacher Assessment Checklist

- The learner has used at least three cleft sentences.
- The cleft sentences are grammatically correct.
- The paragraph sounds natural and not over-complicated.
- The learner has varied sentence structure.
- The paragraph has a clear main idea and supporting details.