These headlines are composed of only a noun phrase. Headline 1 shows a tendency to compress meaning by stringing nouns together (four nouns occur in sequence).

In addition, non-clausal material also occurs in running text, where it adds a colloquial tone:

3 ***And now for something completely different: cheap and cheerful claret.*** (NEWS)

4 *Now there is no bar to having more than one particle in each state.* **Quite the contrary.** (ACAD)

Review

Major points of Grammar Bite D: Independent clauses

➤ There are four major types of independent clause: declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative clauses.

➤ These correspond to four main types of speech act: statement, question, directive, and exclamation. However, there are mismatches between the clause types and the associated speech-act types.

➤ Questions are varied in form and in function.

➤ Major types of question are *wh*-questions, *yes/no* questions, and alternative questions.

➤ Question tags are also very common in conversation: e.g. *isn't it?*

➤ Grammatically, although independent clauses are the main building blocks of texts, non-clausal material is also common, particularly in conversation.

GRAMMAR BITE

E Dependent clauses

8.15 Finite dependent clauses

We now turn to dependent clauses, surveying the types of finite clause in this section, and then surveying non-finite clauses in 8.16.

8.15.1 Complement clauses

Complement clauses are controlled by a preceding verb, adjective, noun, or preposition. Complement clauses are also called **nominal clauses,** because their syntactic roles are comparable to those of a noun phrase. Thus, they are used as subject, predicative, or object in the main clause. Finite complement clauses are introduced by the subordinator *that* or by a *wh*-word.

• *that*-clauses (see 10.4–8):

That this was a tactical decision <subject> *quickly became apparent.* (NEWS)

They believe **that the minimum wage could threaten their jobs.** <direct object> (NEWS)

- *wh*-clauses (see 10.9–11):

  *'**What I don't understand** <subject> is **why they don't let me know anything.**' <subject predicative> (FICT†)*

  *Perhaps it is us who made them **what they are?** <object predicative> (FICT)*

Complement clauses can also occur within phrases (marked *[]*), as complements of a noun, adjective, or preposition:

  *He was [aware **that a Garda Inquiry was being conducted**]. (NEWS)*

  *There is [a fear **that such rules will be over-bureaucratic**]. (NEWS)*

  *Be [very careful **what you tell me**]. (FICT)*

  *She was [afraid of **what might happen if Chielo suddenly turned round and saw her**]. (FICT)*

8.15.2 Adverbial clauses

Adverbial clauses are used as adverbials in the main clause. Like adverbials in general, they are normally optional elements, and can be placed either at the beginning, middle, or end of the main clause:

1 *If you go to a bank, they'll rip you off.* (CONV)
2 *There's a term and a half left before he moves in.* (CONV)
3 *When the houses were ready, prices of up to £51,000 were quoted.* (NEWS)
4 *Most ions are colourless, although some have distinct colours.* (ACAD)
5 *The conclusion, it seems, is intolerable.* (ACAD)
6 *He was at a tough football camp in Arkansas I guess.* (CONV)

Finite adverbial clauses are normally introduced by a subordinator: e.g. *if*, *before*, *when*, and *although*. (Some subordinators, like *when* in **3**, begin with *wh-*, but the clauses they introduce are not nominal *wh*-clauses like those in 8.15.1). Most adverbial clauses belong to the class of circumstance adverbials, expressing meanings like time, reason, and condition. However, **5** and **6** illustrate a type of adverbial clause called a comment clause, which normally has no subordinator. Sections 11.9–12 provide a detailed account of adverbial clauses.

8.15.3 Relative clauses

A **relative clause** is a postmodifier in a noun phrase, serving to expand the meaning and specify the reference of the head noun. It is introduced by a relativizer, which has a grammatical role (e.g. subject or direct object) in the relative clause, in addition to its linking function. The relativizer points back to its antecedent, the head of the noun phrase (the noun phrase is in *[]*; the relativizer is underlined):

  *He warned the public not to approach [the men, **who are armed and dangerous**]. (NEWS)*

  *A system is [that part of the world **which we are interested in** and **which we are investigating**]. (ACAD)*

Relative clauses are discussed in detail in 9.7–8.

  Nominal relative clauses are actually *wh*-complement clauses (see 8.15.1), but they are equivalent to a general noun as head + relative clause (see 10.9–11):

*Do **what you want**.* (CONV) <= *Do the thing **that you want**.>*

*Whoever rents this apartment next year** might have trouble.* (CONV)
<= *The person **who rents this apartment next year**...>*

8.15.4 Comparative clauses

Comparative clauses are complements in an adjective phrase or an adverb phrase, with a gradable word as head. Comparative forms of adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and determiners (e.g. *bigger, more carefully, less, fewer*) require a basis of comparison. For example, the use of the word *bigger* raises the question 'bigger than what?'. A comparative clause spells out the basis of this comparison, and is introduced by a conjunction (*than* for unequal comparison, and *as* for equal comparison). In **1** below the comparative clause is part of an adjective phrase; in **2** it is part of an adverb phrase (phrases are enclosed in *[]*):

1 *Maybe Henry would realize she was not [as nice **as she pretended to be**].* (FICT)

2 *She fled these Sunday afternoons [earlier **than she should have**].* (FICT)

Comparative clauses were described in 7.14.

8.15.5 Peripheral clauses

Two types of dependent clause have a peripheral role in the main clause: **reporting clauses** and **tag clauses**.

Reporting clauses are on the boundary of dependent and independent status:

1 *'Please come too,' **she begged**. – 'I'll be back when I feel like it,' **he said (to her) without emotion**. – 'I'm sorry,' **she whimpered**.* (FICT†)

A reporting clause introduces somebody's direct speech or thought. As we see in **1**, a reporting clause can report who is speaking (*she, he*), who the addressee is (*to her*), the nature of the speech act (*begged*), and the manner of speaking (*whimpered, without emotion*).

The reporting clause often consists of just a one-word subject and a one-word verb phrase, as in the following examples. But there is variation in the ordering of S and V (see 12.4.3), and in the position of the clause relative to the quoted speech:

2 ***They said**, 'Yes, sir,' and saluted.* (FICT)

3 *'Yes,' **thought Fleury**, 'she's going at it hammer and tongs for his benefit.'* (FICT)

4 *Can we do some singing? **he asks**.* (FICT)

Tag clauses are another type of peripheral clause; they are loosely attached to the end (or sometimes the middle) of another clause. They include not only **question tags** (such as *She's so generous, **isn't she**?*; see 8.11.4) but **declarative tags**, which have the effect of reinforcing the speaker's commitment to the proposition in the main clause:

*Yeah I thoroughly enjoyed it **I did**.* (CONV)

*He's alright **he is**.* (CONV)

Like tags in general (see 13.3.2), tag clauses are characteristic of speech.

8.16 Non-finite dependent clauses

Non-finite clauses are regularly dependent on a main clause. They are more compact and less explicit than finite clauses: they do not have tense or modality, and they usually lack an explicit subject and subordinator (see 8.3.2). There are four major types of non-finite clause: **infinitive clauses, *ing*-clauses, *ed*-participle clauses**, and **verbless clauses**.

8.16.1 Infinitive clauses

Infinitive clauses have a wide range of syntactic roles:

* subject:

   *Artificial pearls before real swine were cast by these jet-set preachers. **To have thought this** made him more cheerful.* (FICT)

* extraposed subject (see 10.3.3):

   *It's difficult **to maintain a friendship**.* (CONV)
   *<compare: **To maintain a friendship** is difficult.>*

* subject predicative:

   *'My goal now is **to look to the future**.'* (NEWS)

* direct object:

   *He upset you very much, and I hate **to see that**.* (FICT)

* object predicative:

   *Some of these issues dropped out of Marx's later works because he considered them **to have been satisfactorily dealt with**.* (ACAD†)

* adverbial:

   *A little group of people had gathered by Mrs. Millings **to watch the police activities on the foreshore**.* (FICT)

* noun complement:

   *They say that failure **to take precautions against injuring others** is negligent.* (ACAD)

* noun postmodifier:

   *It is a callous thing **to do**.* (NEWS)

* part of an adjective phrase:

   *I think the old man's a bit afraid **to go into hospital**.* (CONV†)

In all these roles except object predicative and adverbial, *to*-infinitive clauses act as complement clauses (see 10.12–19).

8.16.2 *Ing*-clauses

Ing-clauses, too, have a varied range of syntactic roles:

* subject:

   ***Having a fever** is pleasant, vacant.* (FICT)

* extraposed subject (see 10.3.3):

   *It's very difficult **getting supplies into Sarajevo**.* (NEWS†)
   *<compare: **Getting supplies into Sarajevo** is very difficult.>*

- subject predicative:

  *The real problem is **getting something done about cheap imports**.* (NEWS)

- direct object:

  *I started **thinking about Christmas**.* (CONV†)

- adverbial:

  *I didn't come out of it **looking particularly well**, I know.* (FICT)

- complement of a preposition (including prepositional object):

  *No-one could rely on **his going to bed early** last night.* (FICT†)

- noun postmodifier:

  *The man **making the bogus collections** was described as middle aged.* (NEWS)

- part of an adjective phrase:

  *The town is busy **taking advantage of its first City Challenge victory**.* (NEWS†)

8.16.3 *Ed*-participle clauses

Ed-participle clauses (also called past participle clauses) are less versatile than the other types of non-finite clauses. They can have the following roles:

- direct object:

  *Two-year-old Constantin will have **his cleft-palate repaired**.* (NEWS†)

- adverbial:

  When told by police how badly injured his victims were he said: 'Good, I hope they die'. (NEWS)

- noun postmodifier:

  *This, as we have seen, is the course **chosen by a large minority of households**.* (ACAD†)

Notice from this last example that the *ed*-participle form can take different forms with irregular verbs.

8.16.4 Supplement clauses

In the examples given in 8.16.1–3, the non-finite clauses are clearly integrated within the main clause. **Supplement clauses**, in contrast, are more loosely attached and can be considered a peripheral type of adverbial clause. They occur mostly in written registers, where they are usually marked off by a comma:

1 *[**Considered by many as Disney's last true classic**], The Jungle Book boasts some terrific songs.* (NEWS†)

2 *She gazed down at the floor, [**biting her lip**], [**face clouded**].* (FICT)

(Example 2 contains two supplement clauses in sequence.)

The relation between a supplement clause and its main clause is loose in meaning as well as form. By using a supplement clause, the writer marks information as supplementary background information in relation to the main clause. Supplement clauses can be *ing*-clauses or *ed*-clauses. They can also be verbless clauses.

8.16.5 Verbless clauses

Verbless clauses might be considered a special type of non-finite clause:

1 *She had also been taught, **when in difficulty**, to think of a good life to imitate.* (FICT)
2 ***Although not a classic**, this 90-minute video is worth watching.* (NEWS†)
3 *He does not believe celibacy should be demanded of priests **whether gay or straight**.* (NEWS)
4 *Every day, **if possible**, allot time at your desk to sorting and filing.* (ACAD†)

These expressions can be treated as adverbial clauses with ellipsis of the verb *be* and the subject. For example, *when in difficulty* in 1 can be decompressed as: *when she was in difficulty*.

The label 'verbless clause' seems a contradiction in terms, since we have described the clause as a unit with a verb phrase as its central element. The reason for wanting to label these units as clauses is that (a) they behave like clauses in their syntactic role, and (b) it is possible (taking account of the ellipsis of the verb *be*) to label their constituents as subordinator + subject predicative or adverbial.

8.17 Subjunctive verbs in dependent clauses

Subjunctive verb forms are rare in present-day English (although they were once much more common). Subjunctive verbs are invariable and thus do not exhibit subject–verb concord.

The present subjunctive is the base form of the verb, used where the *s*-form of the verb would occur normally. It occurs in special kinds of finite dependent clauses, particularly in some *that* complement clauses (1) and occasionally in some adverbial clauses (2):

1 *I told her she could stay with me until she found a place, but she insisted [that she **pay** her own way].* (FICT)
2 *The way in which we work, [whether it **be** in an office or on the factory floor], has undergone a major transformation in the past decade.* (NEWS)

With regular verbs, the present subjunctive is recognizable only with a singular subject. The past subjunctive is restricted to the form *were* used in the singular, especially to express unreal or hypothetical meaning:

3 *My head felt as if it **were** split open.* (FICT†)

Like the present subjunctive, this form is recognizable only in the singular, where it is used as an alternative to *was* as a hypothetical past tense verb.