

# 10

## *Verb and adjective complement clauses*

### GRAMMAR BITES in this chapter

#### **A** Types and positions of complement clauses

- ▶ The four major and other minor types of complement clauses
- ▶ The grammatical positions of complement clauses: subject, post-predicate, and extraposed

#### **B** *That*-clauses

- ▶ The functions of *that*-clauses in discourse
- ▶ The grammatical patterns of *that*-clauses
- ▶ Verbs and adjectives that commonly control *that*-clauses
- ▶ Choices with *that*-clauses: subject v. extraposed position, and omission of *that*

#### **C** *Wh*-clauses

- ▶ The different types of *wh*-clauses and their functions
- ▶ Grammatical patterns of *wh*-clauses
- ▶ Common verbs controlling *wh*-clauses
- ▶ *Wh*-clauses that use *whether* and *if*

#### **D** Post-predicate infinitive clauses

- ▶ Grammatical patterns of *to*-clauses controlled by verbs
- ▶ Common verbs controlling *to*-clauses
- ▶ The functions of subject predicative *to*-clauses
- ▶ Common adjectives controlling *to*-clauses

#### **E** More on infinitive clauses

- ▶ Description of raising in *to*-clauses controlled by verbs and adjectives
- ▶ The use of extraposed and subject position *to*-clauses
- ▶ The choice between raised constructions and extraposed constructions
- ▶ A summary of *to*-clause use across registers

#### **F** *Ing*-clauses, ellipsis/substitution, and review

- ▶ Grammatical patterns of *ing*-clauses
- ▶ Common verbs and adjectives controlling *ing*-clauses
- ▶ Ellipsis and substitution in *to*-, *wh*-, and *that*-clauses
- ▶ A review of complement clause use across registers

## 10.1 Introduction

Complement clauses are dependent clauses that complete the meaning of a verb, adjective, or noun. For example, the *that*-complement clause in the following utterance provides the content of the ‘thinking’:

*I thought that it looked good.* (CONV†)

Here the main clause verb—*thought*—is said to control the complement clause.

Complement clauses are also called **nominal clauses**, because they often occupy a noun phrase slot in a clause, such as subject, object, or predicative. For example, the following *that*-clause is the direct object of the verb *said*:

*I said that I wasn't perfect.* (CONV†)

Complement clauses can also complete the meaning of an adjective rather than a verb. In this case, a predicative adjective controls the complement clause. In the following example, the *that*-clause is a complement to the adjective *careful*:

*I've gotta be careful that I don't sound too pompous.* (CONV†)

In this chapter we use the term **predicate** for the element that controls a complement clause: either a lexical verb or a predicative adjective.

Nouns can also control complement clauses. This was dealt with in the last chapter, in 9.13–14. In this chapter we focus on verb and adjective complementation.

### GRAMMAR BITE

## A Types and positions of complement clauses

### 10.2 Types of complement clauses

There are four major types of complement clauses: *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses are finite complement clauses; *to*-clauses and *ing*-clauses are non-finite complement clauses (see 8.3.2). The clause types can be distinguished by their **complementizer**: the word that begins the complement clause (such as *that* or *to*). All four of the main types can complement both verbs and adjectives.

#### A *That*-clauses

*They warned him that it's dangerous.* (CONV†)

*That*-clauses are finite. Therefore, they are marked for tense or modality, and they have a subject. *That*-clauses can also occur without the complementizer *that*:

*I thought it was a good film.* (CONV)

<compare: *I thought that it was a good film.*>

The absence of the complementizer does not change the structure of the clause: it is still a finite dependent clause that completes the meaning of the verb (*thought*) and functions as direct object.

### B *Wh*-clauses

*She didn't ask what my plans were.* (FICT)

*Wh*-clauses begin with a *wh*-word (including *how*). Like *that*-clauses, they are finite clauses, and can show tense or modality and must have a subject.

### C *To*-infinitive clauses

*We wanted to talk in front of my aunt.* (FICT)

*To*-infinitive clauses are non-finite complement clauses. They cannot have tense or modals (for example, you cannot say *\*to talked*), and usually they do not have a subject. In most cases, the assumed subject of the complement clause is the subject of the main clause.

*To*-infinitive clauses can also occur in combination with *wh*-clauses:

*She never knows how to just say no.* (CONV)

### D *Ing*-clauses

*He began crunching it gently but firmly.* (FICT†)

*Ing*-clauses are also non-finite; they have an *ing*-participle as their main verb form.

### E Additional types of complement clause

In addition to the four major types, there are two less productive types of complement clause: **bare-infinitive clauses** and ***ed*-clauses**. Both of these are non-finite clauses.

Bare infinitive clauses are a special type of infinitive clause with an infinitive verb form, but without *to*:

*Surrey police say the film would help identify participants at the weekend party.* (NEWS)

<compare: *Surrey police say the film would help to identify participants...*>

*Ed*-complement clauses are rare and very restricted in their distribution. For example:

*I got the door **unlocked**.* (FICT†)

*Western Union must have got the names **reversed**.* (FICT†)

*They had carnival rides **trucked in and installed on the great green lawns**.* (FICT†)

*Ed*-clauses can complement only verbs, and only a few main clause verbs can control them (e.g. *get*, *have*, *want*, *need*, *see*, and *hear*). As you can see from the examples above, the *ed*-clause is separated from the controlling verb by a noun phrase.

## 10.3 Grammatical positions of complement clauses

There are three major grammatical positions for complement clauses: **subject** (or **pre-predicate**), **post-predicate**, and **extraposed**. Extraposed is actually an alternative to subject position.

### 10.3.1 Subject position

Complement clauses can occur before the verb, i.e. in subject position. This position is possible for complement clauses controlled by a verb or an adjective. This position is also sometimes called ‘pre-predicate position’, because the complement clause comes before the predicate.

- Subject position, verb complement clauses:

*That they are already struggling troubles Graham Taylor.* (NEWS)

*What is good among one people is an abomination with others.* (FICT)

*However, to say all other courses are impossible is not to say this course is possible.* (NEWS)

*Walking the back nine confirms what all the fuss is about.* (NEWS)

- Subject position, adjective complement clauses:

*That it would be unpopular with colleges or students was obvious.*

(NEWS)

*What a single mother represents may seem touchingly attractive.* (NEWS)

*To attempt to forecast the effects of changing regulations on a national scale is very difficult.* (ACAD)

*Her coming was quite useless.* (FICT)

### 10.3.2 Post-predicate position

All complement clause types can occur after the verb or adjective that controls them. This is the post-predicate position. Post-predicate complement clauses can function as direct object (following a transitive verb), subject predicative (following a copular verb), or an adjective complement (following a predicative adjective). (Section 8.3.3 summarizes the range of syntactic roles for complement clauses.)

- Verb complement clause as direct object:

*They conclude that the change was cynical and opportunistic.* (NEWS)

*You know what I call my mom.* (CONV)

*They are trying to hold it together.* (CONV†)

*I'm not going to start going on any cross-country runs at my age.* (FICT)

- Verb complement clause as subject predicative after a copular verb:

*The industry's premise is that we can recognize information presented below our threshold awareness.* (NEWS)

*That's what the case is all about.* (NEWS)

The immediate reason for his return is to give two charity concerts.

(NEWS†)

Happiness is being able to assume you are happy. (FICT†)

- Adjective complement clause (post-predicate position):

I feel very confident that Republican state organizations would finance an opponent. (NEWS†)

I'm not sure when it's open. (CONV)

Everybody's glad to have him around. (CONV)

The Prime Minister appeared confident of winning an overall majority.

(NEWS†)

### 10.3.3 Extraposed position

Complement clauses rarely occur in subject position. Instead, extraposed clauses are usually used to express an equivalent meaning. In an extraposed structure, dummy *it* fills the subject slot, and the complement clause occurs after the predicate. Dummy *it* does not refer to anything—it simply fills the grammatical place of subject. However, the post-predicate complement clause functions as the logical subject. For example, consider this extraposed *wh*-clause, complement to the adjective *clear*:

It was not immediately clear how the Soviet leadership could enforce such a ruling. (NEWS†)

<compare: *How the Soviet leadership could enforce such a ruling was not immediately clear.*>

*That*-clauses and *to*-clauses are the most common types of complement clauses in extraposed position. They occur as complements of both adjectives and verbs.

- Extraposed *that*-clause as verb complement:

It appears that Big Blue does not lead the market. (NEWS)

<compare: *That Big Blue does not lead the market appears (to be the case).*>

- Extraposed *that*-clause as adjective complement:

It seems odd that I should be expected to pay for the privilege of assisting in this way. (NEWS)

<compare: *That I should be expected to pay ... seems odd.*>

- Extraposed *to*-clause as verb complement:

It had taken him 26 years to return. (NEWS†)

<compare: *To return had taken him 26 years.*>

- Extraposed *to*-clause as adjective complement:

It's good to see them in the bath. (CONV†)

<compare: *To see them in the bath is good.*>

#### Review

Major points in GRAMMAR BITE A: Types and positions of complement clauses

- There are four major types of complement clauses: *that*-, *wh*-, *to*-, and *ing*-clauses.
- Less common types are the bare infinitive clause and *ed*-clause.

- There are three major grammatical positions for complement clauses: subject (or pre-predicate), post-predicate, and extraposed (an alternative for subject position).

## GRAMMAR BITE

## B *That*-clauses

### 10.4 Discourse functions of *that*-clauses



Different kinds of *that*-clauses serve different functions. Their frequencies across registers—shown in Figure 10.1—reflect the communicative needs of each register in relation to these typical functions. (Subject and subject predicative *that*-clauses are relatively rare in all registers and are thus omitted from Figure 10.1.)

#### 10.4.1 Post-predicate *that*-clauses

*That*-clauses in post-predicate position are by far the most common type of *that*-clause—they account for over 80 per cent of all *that*-clauses. These *that*-clauses typically report the speech and thoughts of humans. The subject of the main clause usually refers to a person, the main clause verb presents the type of reporting (e.g. speech or thought), and the *that*-clause presents the reported speech or thought. Although these structures are common in fiction and news, they are even more common in conversation, with its focus on interpersonal communication.

*I think Stuart's gone a bit mad.* (CONV)

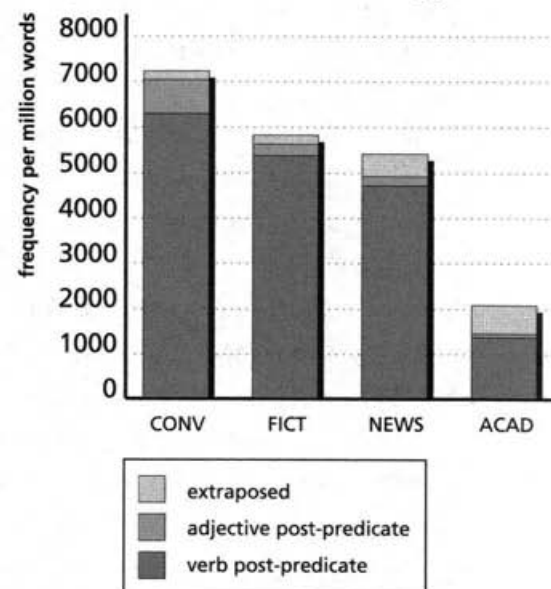
*Did you know that Kathy Jones had a brother here?* (CONV)

*He said that nine indictments have been returned publicly in such investigations.* (NEWS)

Post-predicate *that*-clauses controlled by adjectives are less common than those controlled by verbs. They generally tell the attitudes and emotions of speakers:

*I was quite confident that it would stay in very well.* (CONV)

Figure 10.1  
Frequencies of *that*-clause types



### 10.4.2 Subject predicative *that*-clauses

When a *that*-clause serves as subject predicative to a copular verb, it usually has one of three functions. First, these constructions often describe a problem of some kind:

*The problem is that the second question cannot be answered until Washington comes up with a consensus on the first.* (NEWS)

*The only problem may be that the compound is difficult to remove after use.* (ACAD)

Second, subject predicative *that*-clauses can present reasons, results, or conclusions:

*The net result is that foreign money has frequently ended up fertilising or irrigating opium fields.* (NEWS†)

*Our first conclusion at this point was that it is necessary to support the specification.* (ACAD†)

The third function is to present accepted truths or facts:

*The truth is that the country is now specialising more in processing and marketing.* (NEWS)

Subject predicative *that*-clauses are used mostly in news and academic prose.

### 10.4.3 Extraposed *that*-clauses

Extraposed *that*-clauses often involve a main clause that reports an attitude or stance without attributing it to anybody. Usually they show the attitude of the speaker or writer of the text, but the author does not assume direct responsibility:

*It is certain that the challenges ahead are at least as daunting as anything the cold war produced.* (NEWS†)

*It is vitally important that both groups are used to support one another.* (ACAD†)

Extraposed *that*-clauses are used primarily in news and academic prose. The *that*-clause usually has a non-human subject, and reports a state or relationship in an impersonal manner.

### 10.4.4 Embedded *that*-clauses

*That*-clauses often occur in complex series, using various kinds of coordination and embedding. Post-predicate clauses can be mixed with extraposed clauses. Surprisingly, complex structures of this type are found in conversation as well as in news and academic prose. Thus, the following example is quoted speech reported in a newspaper article:

*I think [that President Reagan believed [[that not only was the government the problem], but [that it was rare indeed [that government could be a positive force in solving the problem]]]].* (NEWS)

Even in this complicated sentence, you can see the *that*-clauses fulfilling their typical functions of reporting thoughts and attitudes.

## 10.5 Post-predicate *that*-clauses

### 10.5.1 Grammatical patterns

There are three major grammatical patterns for verbs that take a *that*-clause in post-predicate position:

- **Pattern 1: verb + *that*-clause** (e.g. *agree*, *ask*)
  - 1 *I didn't agree that he should be compelled to do singing.* (CONV)
- **Pattern 2: verb + NP + *that*-clause** (e.g. *tell*, *persuade*)
  - 2 *I persuaded [myself] that something awful might happen.* (FICT)
- **Pattern 3: verb + *to* NP + *that* clause** (e.g. *suggest*)
  - 3 *I suggested [to Miss Kerrison] that she sit down on the chair and wait.* (FICT)

All verbs that can occur in Pattern 3 can also occur in Pattern 1. For example, compare 3 to 4 below:

4 *I suggested that she sit down on the chair and wait.*

(For a discussion of the subjunctive *she sit . . . wait* in 3 and 4, see 8.17.)

Many verbs can occur with both Pattern 1 and 2 (e.g. *promise*):

*I promise that we will take great care of him.* (FICT†)

<compare: *I promise [you] that we will take great care of him.*>

A few verbs can occur with all three patterns (e.g. *write*, *cable*, *wire*):

*I wrote that I would be satisfied with any old freighter.* (FICT†)

<compare: *I wrote [him] that I would be satisfied with any old freighter;*

*I wrote [to him] that I would be satisfied with any old freighter.*>

Most of the verbs that take Pattern 2 can also occur in the passive voice with a *that*-clause:

[He] was told that she had checked out of the hospital. (FICT†)

<compare: *Someone told [him] that she had checked out of the hospital.*>

*That*-clauses do not occur following prepositions. However, some of the verbs that take *that*-clauses correspond to prepositional verbs taking noun phrases:

Pattern 1: *agree* + *that*-clause                      compare: *agree to* + NP

Pattern 2: *advise* + NP + *that*-clause            compare: *advise* + NP + *of/about* NP

For example:

*We all agree that cuts are needed.* (NEWS)

<compare: *Would she agree to [it]?* (CONV)>

*He advised [them] that my stated intention would put the Prime Minister's future at risk.* (NEWS†)

<compare: *He advised [the police] of [the first raid].* (NEWS†)>



### 10.5.2 Verbs controlling post-predicate *that*-clauses

Ten verbs are especially common controlling *that* post-predicate clauses: *think*, *say*, *know*, *see*, *find*, *believe*, *feel*, *suggest*, *show*, and *guess* (in American English conversation). Table 10.1 lists all common verbs controlling *that*-clauses divided into semantic domains.



Table 10.1 The most common verbs controlling a complement *that*-clause by semantic domain and register; occurrences per million words

semantic domain	occurrences per million words			
	CONV	FICT	NEWS	ACAD
<b>mental/cognition</b>				
<i>know</i>	over 600	over 200	over 100	over 20
<i>think</i>	over 600	over 200	over 100	over 20
<i>guess</i> (AmE)	over 200	over 100		
<i>see</i>	over 100	over 200	over 100	over 20
<i>find</i>	over 20	over 200	over 100	over 20
<i>believe</i>	over 20	over 100	over 200	over 20
<i>mean</i>	over 100	over 100	over 20	over 20
<i>suppose</i>	over 100	over 100		over 20
<i>feel</i>	over 20	over 200	over 100	over 20
<i>realize</i>	over 20	over 100	over 100	over 20
<i>hear</i>	over 20	over 100	over 100	
<i>hope</i>	over 20	over 100	over 100	
<i>assume</i>		over 20	over 100	over 20
<b>speech act</b>				
<i>say</i>	over 600	over 200	over 200	over 200
<b>other communication</b>				
<i>show</i>	over 20	over 20	over 100	over 200
<i>suggest</i>		over 20	over 100	over 200
<i>ensure</i>			over 20	over 20
<i>indicate</i>			over 20	over 20

### A Mental verbs

Mental verbs are very common with *that*-clauses, reporting various mental states and attitudes. The verb *think* is especially common in conversation—it is frequently used in the fixed expression *I think* to report one's own thoughts and lack of certainty:

*I think we picked it.* (CONV†)

*I think he does too much in the furniture business.* (CONV†)

The verb *guess* + *that*-clause is very common in American English conversation and fiction:

*I guess I should probably call Michele.* (AmE CONV)

*I guess they didn't hear anything.* (FICT)

In general, fiction uses a wider range of mental verbs than conversation to describe characters' mental states:

*He knew that if he touched it, it would be as soft as silk.* (FICT†)

*She saw that it was a moose with a body as big as a truck.* (FICT)

*He looked at the wound and found that it had stopped bleeding.* (FICT†)

He felt *that something was going to happen tonight.* (FICT†)

The verb *believe* also reports a cognitive state, but it is more common in news than the other registers:

The Secretary of State and Mr. Bush believe *that there are trustworthy deals to be done.* (NEWS†)

Mental verbs with *that*-clauses are an important device for expressing stance. For example, verbs such as *think*, *feel*, and *assume* convey a sense of possibility combined with uncertainty, while verbs such as *know*, *find*, and *see* convey a greater sense of certainty. Compare the level of certainty in these two examples:

I think *it's gotta be through there.* (CONV)

I know *I told you.* (CONV)

Mental verbs are less common with *that*-clauses in academic prose, because academic writers usually do not mark the reports of personal thoughts explicitly.

## B Speech act and other communication verbs

The second common use of *that*-clauses is to report what someone said. For example:

She said *that it's lovely to wear.* (CONV)

Fatty had told him *that he looked the type.* (FICT†)

Besides, aid workers argue *that cutting any aid will only result in more poppies.* (NEWS)

The verb *say* is extremely common in news and conversation. Its frequent use in news reflects the fact that statements by public figures are newsworthy:

Mr. Kenneth Clarke, the Health Secretary, yesterday said *that the latest pay offer made last Friday was worth 9 per cent.* (NEWS†)

Direct speech reporting is an alternative way to express the same content as a *that*-clause with a speech act verb. The clause in direct speech gives the content of the speech, and is associated with a reporting clause containing a speech act verb (see 8.15.5):

*It will be ineffective against the multi-layer reactive armour, experts say.*  
(NEWS)

<compare: Experts say *that it will be ineffective against the multi-layer reactive armour.*>

Academic prose shows a moderately frequent use of communication verbs such as *show*, *ensure*, and *indicate*. These verbs are often used with a non-personal subject. Therefore, the idea expressed in the *that*-clause is not overtly attributed to anybody:

Life histories show *that elite women also chose spouses of the same social and economic status as themselves.* (ACAD)

Investigations at the Irri indicate *that high yields and high water efficiency can be achieved with continuous flow of shallow water.*  
(ACAD†)

Notice that many of these communication verbs also indicate the degree of certainty associated with the information. In the examples above, *indicate* is less certain than *show*. *Suggest* is even less certain, while *prove* expresses an extreme degree of certainty:

*They suggest that he could become the country's national president.*

(NEWS†)

*It is extremely difficult to prove that there is no gene flow between enclaves.* (ACAD†)

Finally, there are some communication verbs used with *that*-clauses to propose a potential course of action. These are not the most common verbs controlling *that*-clauses, but they are familiar verbs such as *advise*, *insist*, *order*, and *ask*:

1 *The medicine-man then ordered that there should be no mourning for the dead child.* (FICT)

2 *We ask that this food be blessed.* (CONV†)

*That*-clauses with this function generally occur with either the modal *should*, as in 1, or an uninflected subjunctive verb form (e.g. *be*), as in 2.

## 10.6 Verbs controlling extraposed

### *that*-clauses

Extraposed *that*-clauses controlled by verbs are much less common than post-predicate *that*-clauses, and many fewer verbs can control extraposed clauses. The copula *be* is most common. In these structures, the controlling predicate is the copula in combination with the following predicative noun phrase, such as *is a wonder* in the following:

*It's a wonder he's got any business at all!* (CONV)

*It's a wonder the tree's alive, but it is.* (FICT)

The copular verbs *seem* and *appear* can also take this pattern:

*It seemed however that in-pig sows showed more stress than empty ones.*

(ACAD)

*It now appears that I will be expected to part with a further portion of my income.* (NEWS†)

The verb *follow* is used in an intransitive sense with extraposed *that*-clauses:

*It follows that metals are better conductors at lower temperatures.* (ACAD)

Extraposed *that*-clauses also occur after passive voice verbs, such as *be found*, *be known*, *be assumed*, *be said*, and *be shown*:

*It can be assumed that number of kilometers driven in one year is a fair indication of experience of driving.* (ACAD)

## 10.7 *That*-clauses controlled by adjectives

The adjectives that control a *that*-complement clause all convey stance. They fall into three major categories: degrees of certainty (e.g. *certain*, *confident*, *evident*); affective states (e.g. *annoyed*, *glad*, *sad*); and evaluations (e.g. *appropriate*, *odd*, *good*, *important*, *advisable*).

*That*-clauses controlled by adjectival predicates occur in post-predicate or extraposed position:

- post-predicate *that*-clause:  
*I'm glad that I found you again.* (FICT)
- extraposed *that*-clause:

*It's nice that people say it to you unprompted.* (CONV)

A few adjectives, like *certain* and *sad*, can control both post-predicate and extraposed clauses. However, most adjectives can control only one type of clause. The following sections describe the adjectives that take each type.

### 10.7.1 Adjectives controlling post-predicate *that*-clauses

Only one adjective is especially common with post-predicate *that*-clauses: *sure*.

*I'm sure that they'd got two little rooms on the ground floor.* (CONV†)

Some other adjectives controlling post-predicate *that*-clauses are:

certainty: *certain, confident, convinced, positive, right, sure*

emotive: *afraid, amazed, angry, annoyed, astonished, (un)aware, careful, concerned, depressed, disappointed, encouraged, frightened, glad, grateful, (un)happy, hopeful, hurt, irritated, mad, pleased, proud, relieved, sad, (dis)satisfied, shocked, sorry, surprised, thankful, upset, worried*

Adjectives + post-predicate *that*-clauses typically occur with a human subject, so that the associated stance is tied directly to that person:

- certainty adjective:  
*The minister is confident that Pakistan could deflect western pressure.*  
(NEWS)
- emotive adjectives:  
*I'm afraid it brings the caterpillars in.* (CONV)  
*I'm sorry I hit you just now.* (FICT)

### 10.7.2 Adjectives controlling extraposed *that*-clauses

Some common adjectives controlling extraposed *that*-clauses are:

*clear, (un)likely, (im)possible, true.*

Others include:

certainty: *certain, doubtful, evident, false, inevitable, obvious, plain, probable, right, well-known*

emotion or evaluation: *amazing, astonishing, awful, curious, disappointing, embarrassing, (un)fortunate, frightening, funny, good, great, horrible, inconceivable, incredible, interesting, irritating, (un)lucky, natural, neat, nice, notable, noteworthy, odd, ridiculous, sad, shocking, silly, strange, stupid, surprising, tragic, unfair, understandable, unthinkable, unusual, upsetting, wonderful*

importance: *critical, crucial, essential, important, necessary, obligatory, vital*

Adjectival predicates with extraposed *that*-clauses mark a stance or attitude towards what is in the *that*-clause. In most cases, the stance or attitude belongs to

the speaker or writer, but this relationship is not overt because the subject of the main clause is the empty *it*.

The most common adjectives controlling extraposed *that*-clauses (*clear*, *(un)likely*, *(im)possible*, *true*) express the (un)certainty of the idea in the *that*-clause:

*It is indeed possible that the results of research will lead to a reappraisal of current methods of cultivation.* (ACAD)

*It is unlikely that any insect exceeds about twice this velocity.* (ACAD)

Emotion/evaluation adjectives express other positive or negative attitudes to the information in the *that*-clause: e.g. *appropriate*, *fortunate*, *great*, *awful*, *disappointing*, *unlucky*.

*It is good that our clan holds the Ozo title in high esteem.* (FICT†)

*It's horrible that he put up with Claire's nagging.* (CONV)

Other affective adjectives are not strongly positive or negative, but indicate an emotional response such as surprise, interest, or amusement:

*It's pretty funny that you and Alicia were the only ones in the classroom.* (FICT†)

*It's incredible that Paul is still playing.* (NEWS†)

Importance adjectives with extraposed *that*-clauses are most common in academic prose. Some evaluation and importance adjectives are used with extraposed *that*-clauses to propose a course of action. They thus have a hypothetical sense and usually occur with *should* or with subjunctive verb forms (marked \*):

*It is sensible that the breeding animals receive the highest protection.* (ACAD)

*It is essential that the two instruments should run parallel to the microscope state.* (ACAD)

*It is important that it be\* well sealed from air leakage.* (ACAD)

*It is desirable that it be\* both lined and insulated.* (ACAD†)

## 10.8 Discourse choices with *that*-clauses



### 10.8.1 Subject position v. extraposed *that*-clauses

Subject *that*-clauses and extraposed *that*-clauses are equivalent structures. In both cases, the *that*-clause is the logical subject of the sentence.

*Maybe it annoys them that you don't fit their image of a fairy princess.* (FICT)

<compare: *That you don't fit their image of a fairy princess annoys them.*>

A third related structure has a subject noun phrase that begins with *the fact that* (see 9.13.1):

*The fact that the medical technicians were available does not make the government's conduct any less offensive.* (NEWS)

Overall, extraposed *that*-clauses are far more common than subject *that*-clauses. As a result, when subject *that*-clauses are used, they serve special discourse functions. Specifically, there are four factors that are important in the choice of a subject *that*-clause over an extraposed one:

### A Register

Subject *that*-clauses are rare in all registers. They occur occasionally in academic prose and news, but they are virtually non-existent in conversation.

This preference for extraposed *that*-clauses over subject *that*-clauses reflects the general preference in English to use short, simple subjects, and to use longer, more complex structures towards the end of a clause. (See 12.1.4 on the principle of end-weight.)

Subject *that*-clauses cause difficulties for both speakers and listeners: we must understand the embedded complement clause and hold it in our memory until we get to the main clause predicate. The problems caused by a subject *that*-clause are especially great in conversation, because there is no time for editing or re-hearing.

### B Information structure

In almost every case where a subject *that*-clause is used, it presents information that is already presupposed as factual or generally accepted. The information in the *that*-clause is established through previously stated information. The subject *that*-clause therefore provides a link with previous discourse, and follows the information flow principle, with established information occurring before new information (see 12.1.1). For example:

*One of the triumphs of radioactive dating emerged only gradually as more and more workers dated meteorites. It became surprisingly apparent that all meteorites are of the same age, somewhere in the vicinity of 4.5 billion years old <...>*

*That there are no meteorites of any other age, regardless of when they fell to Earth, suggests strongly that all meteorites originated in other bodies of the solar system that formed at the same time the Earth did. (ACAD)*

Here the subject *that*-clause summarizes information that can be deduced from the previous paragraph. It states this known information as the subject of the sentence and moves on to the new information (*all meteorites originate in other bodies ...*).

### C Grammatical factors

In most cases when a subject *that*-clause is used, the main clause predicate has a complex construction with many phrases or clauses. For example:


*That a stimulus can be processed either verbally or non-verbally helps [to make sense of those otherwise anomalous findings in which verbal stimuli give rise to a LVF superiority]. (ACAD)*

The alternative extraposed construction would be very hard to understand in cases like this.

**D Topic and style**

Personal style and topic can also favor the use of subject *that*-clauses. Some authors use subject *that*-clauses more than others. Sports writers as a group have a stylistic preference for them, as in:

*That the 49ers' injury-ravaged defensive secondary was exploited by the Vikings (2-1) was no shocker.* (NEWS†)


**10.8.2 Retention v. omission of *that***

Another major choice with *that*-clauses is whether to use the *that*-complementizer or not. There is no difference in meaning:

*I hope you realized they said a few words on there.* (CONV)

<compare: *I hope [that] you realized [that] they said a few words on there.*>

While you might guess that these options are fairly random, there are actually strong discourse factors associated with the omission or retention of *that*.

**A Register factors**

In conversation, omission of *that* is typical. In academic prose, on the other hand, omission of *that* is unusual. These preferences follow general patterns for the two registers: conversation often favors the reduction or omission of constituents that are not necessary; academic prose, in contrast, is carefully produced, and has elaborated structures.

**B Factors favoring omission of *that***

Three grammatical factors are associated with the omission of *that*: *say/think* as the main clause verb, co-referential subjects in the main clause and *that*-clause, and a personal pronoun as subject of the *that*-clause. These characteristics are illustrated in 1-2:

1 *I think I'll make a shopping list today.* (CONV)

2 *You said you didn't.* (CONV)

In 1, the controlling verb is *think*, while in 2 it is *say*. Both examples have co-referential subjects for the main clause and *that*-clause (*I-I* in 1, *you-you* in 2), and the *that*-clause subjects are personal pronouns.

*That*-complement clauses often have these characteristics. Therefore, it is easy for hearers/readers to recognize the presence of these *that*-clauses without explicit marking with *that*.

**C Factors favoring retention of *that***

Three grammatical characteristics are associated with the retention of *that*: coordinated *that*-clauses, use of passive voice, and an intervening noun phrase.

First, coordinated *that*-clauses almost always retain the *that*. It would be hard to identify the start of the second *that*-clause in 1 if *that* were omitted:

1 *The major conclusion of both studies was that the nation and particularly the state of Florida must quickly reduce their large reliance on foreign oil and that conservation measures and increased reliance on the abundant national supply of coal were the major alternatives.* (ACAD)

Second, when a passive voice verb is used in the main clause, *that* is usually retained:

*I was told that both the new right and those who support the government's view had been excluded.* (NEWS†)

Third, if there is an intervening noun phrase (marked in [] below) between the main clause verb and the *that*-clause, the *that* is usually retained:

*They warn [him] that it's dangerous.* (CONV)

The influence of these factors is strongest in conversation: omission of *that* is the norm in conversation, but when these factors occur, *that* is almost always retained.

## Review

Major points in GRAMMAR BITE B: *That*-clauses

- The most common type of *that*-clause is post-predicate. Its typical function is reporting the thoughts and speech of humans.
  - Each of the other types of *that*-clauses has particular functions in discourse also.
- Mental verbs and speech act/communication verbs are the most common type of verb with a *that*-clause.
  - These verbs reflect the primary function of *that*-clauses for reporting thoughts and speech.
  - Many of the verb + *that*-clause combinations also convey stance.
- Subject-position and extraposed *that*-clauses are much less common than post-predicate *that*-clauses.
  - For verbs, only *be* is common controlling extraposed *that*-clauses.
- The adjectives that control *that*-clauses all convey stance.
  - There are three subcategories of meaning: certainty (e.g. *certain*), psychological states (e.g. *glad, sad*), and evaluation (e.g. *good, important*).
  - Extraposed *that*-clauses are far more common than subject *that*-clauses.
  - When subject *that*-clauses are used, they usually conform to particular characteristics of register, grammatical complexity, and information structure. In addition, some topics and individual writers favor subject *that*-clauses.
- Factors associated with the retention or omission of the *that*-complementizer include register, the main clause verb, and certain characteristics of the subjects in the main clause and *that*-clause.

## GRAMMAR BITE

# c Wh-clauses

## 10.9 Structure and function of *wh*-clauses

There are three basic types of *wh*-complement clauses: **interrogative clauses**, **nominal relative clauses**, and **exclamatives**. Interrogative clauses and nominal relative clauses use the same *wh*-words, except that *whether* is used only with interrogatives. Exclamative *wh*-clauses begin with *how* or *what*.



Interrogative clauses are used with verbs such as *ask* and *wonder* to present an indirect question:

- 1 *Jill was asking what happened.* (CONV†)  
<compare: *Jill asked 'What happened?'*>
- 2 *I wonder what that could be about.* (CONV)

Note that there is a change in word order when the *wh*-word corresponds to an object in the complement clause. For example, the complementizer *what* corresponds to the object of the preposition in 2, but it is placed at the front of the complement clause (not: \**I wonder that could be about what*).

Nominal relative clauses can be paraphrased with a general head noun + relative clause:

- Yes. Burbidge Road. Which is where Carlos used to live.* (CONV)  
<paraphrase: *Which is the place where Carlos used to live.*>  
*What baffles me is how few of them can spell.* (NEWS)  
<paraphrase: *The thing that baffles me is...*>

Exclamative *wh*-clauses are less common than the other types. They begin with *how* + adjective or with *what* as a predeterminer. They act as indirect exclaimatives (see 8.12):

- He still remembered how wonderful it had been.* (FICT)  
*I was thinking how nice you are, what a good actor, and what a nice man.* (FICT†)  
<compare: *I was thinking 'How nice you are! ...'*>

As these examples show, exclamative *wh*-clauses have a change in word order. The subject predicative and its *wh*-word (e.g. *how wonderful*, *how nice*) is placed at the front of the clause.

### 10.9.1 *Wh*-clauses controlled by verbs

With verbs, *wh*-complement clauses often occur in object position. For example:

- You give him what he wants.* (FICT)

*Wh*-clauses can also occur as subject:

- What could be at work there is an actual enmity towards the very structure of society.* (FICT)  
*How to read the record is the subject of much of this book.* (ACAD)

*Wh*-clauses also occur as subject predicatives. These structures are particularly common in conversation, with the demonstrative pronoun *that* as subject, and the copula contracted to 's:

- That's what I'm saying.* (CONV)  
*That's why I bought the refill.* (CONV)

### 10.9.2 *Wh*-clauses as complements of adjectives and prepositions

*Wh*-clauses can also follow adjectival predicates:

- I'm not sure when it's open for anybody.* (CONV)  
*She wanted to be careful what she said.* (FICT)

*Wh*-clauses that are complements of adjectives can also be extraposed:

*It was incredible **what had happened to them.** (FICT)*

*It was not immediately clear **how the Soviet leadership could enforce such a ruling.** (NEWS)*

Finally, unlike *that*-clauses, *wh*-clauses can be the complement of a preposition or the object of a prepositional verb:

*She was amazed at **how exhausted she was.** (FICT)*

<compare: *She was amazed **that she was so exhausted.**>*

## 10.10 Post-predicate *wh*-clauses controlled by verbs

### 10.10.1 Grammatical patterns

There are two important grammatical patterns used with *wh*-complement clauses in post-predicate position:

- **Pattern 1: verb + *wh*-clause** (e.g. *know, remember, see*)

*I don't know **what they are.** (CONV)*

*I can't remember **how I used to be.** (FICT)*

- **Pattern 2: verb + NP + *wh*-clause** (e.g. *ask, show, tell*)

*I didn't tell [you] **what Emma thought.** (CONV)*

*I want you to show [me] **where the car went off.** (FICT)*

Pattern 1 has a variant with prepositional verbs:

*You actually think about **what you're seeing.** (CONV†)*

Pattern 2 can also occur with a prepositional verb, where the preposition occurs between the NP and the *wh*-clause, e.g. *remind* + NP + *of* + *wh*-clause:

*They remind [me] of **when I was at school.** (CONV)*

In both patterns, some verbs can take *wh*-infinitive clauses. The *wh*-word is followed by the *to* infinitive marker and the uninflected form of the verb:

*You must also understand **how to check their accuracy at recognised stages.** (ACAD†)*

*I would tell [them] **where to go.** (CONV)*

### 10.10.2 Verbs controlling *wh*-clauses

As you can see in Table 10.2, the most common verbs controlling a *wh*-clause fall into four major semantic domains: mental, speech act, other communication, and perception. In addition, the relationship verb *depend* (*on*) is common in conversation.

By far the most common verb controlling a *wh*-clause is *know* in conversation. Although it can be used to report what a speaker knows, it is even more commonly used to report what the speaker does not know:

*I know **what she said.** (CONV)*

Table 10.2 The most common verbs controlling a complement *wh*-clause by semantic domain and register; occurrences per million words

semantic domain	occurrences per million words			
	CONV	FICT	NEWS	ACAD
<b>cognition</b>				
<i>know</i>	over 1000	over 500	over 200	over 100
<i>wonder</i>	over 100	over 200		
<i>think (about)</i>	over 100	over 20		
<i>remember</i>	over 100	over 20		
<i>understand</i>	over 20	over 200		over 20
<i>guess</i>	over 20			
<i>realize</i>				over 20
<i>find (out)</i>		over 20		
<b>speech act</b>				
<i>tell (NP)</i>	over 100	over 200	over 20	
<i>ask (NP)</i>	over 100	over 200	over 20	
<i>say</i>	over 20	over 20		
<i>explain</i>			over 20	over 20
<b>other communication</b>				
<i>show (NP)</i>	over 20	over 20		over 20
<b>perception</b>				
<i>see</i>	over 1000	over 500	over 200	over 100
<i>look (at)</i>	over 100			
<b>relationship</b>				
<i>depend (on)</i>	over 20			

*I don't know what's happening.* (CONV)

*I don't know where they are.* (CONV)

The verb *know* is also common in dialog in fiction and news:

*I don't know how people are going to get through the winter.* (NEWS)

The verb *see* is also notably common with *wh*-clauses in conversation. Sometimes it is used for literal perceptions of seeing:

*I couldn't see what they were doing.*

More commonly, however, it is used metaphorically to mean 'find out':

*I'll see what cash I've got left.* (CONV)

*So we'll see what transpires this time.* (CONV)

The expression *see what I/you mean* is particularly common in conversation:

*I can see what you mean.* (CONV)

*Do you see what I mean?* (CONV)

Other mental verbs, such as *wonder*, *think (about/of)*, *remember*, and *understand* are relatively common with *wh*-clauses in both conversation and fiction:

*I could never remember how to do them.* (CONV)

*You should wonder why she wants me around.* (FICT)

*Sethe smiled just thinking about what the word could mean.* (FICT)

Speech act verbs are also relatively common with *wh*-clauses in conversation and fiction:

*Did you tell him what Greg said about your arms?* (CONV)

*I am asking what you intend to do about this man.* (FICT)

Although these are the most common verbs with *wh*-clauses, it is important to realize that *wh*-clauses can occur with almost any transitive verb as a nominal relative clause. For example:

*The birds gathered round to eat what was left.* (FICT)

*She also won what they call oratory.* (FICT)

*He dreaded what he might have to do.* (FICT†)

*And I respect what she says.* (CONV)

*Wh*-clauses are generally less common in academic prose. However, there are some mental and communication verbs that are particularly useful with *wh*-clauses in academic prose. These verbs deal with discovery and description:

- mental verbs:

*We need to discover what they believe about AIDS.* (ACAD)

*Thus the programmer can establish when a transput operation is complete.* (ACAD†)

- communication verbs:

*He describes how the National Committee is organized.* (ACAD)

*An evaluation can also indicate what are likely outcomes.* (ACAD†)

## 10.11 Interrogative clauses with *whether* and *if*

The *wh*-word *whether* is used as a complementizer to introduce dependent *yes/no* interrogative clauses that express indirect questions. *If* can be used as a complementizer in the same way:

- *whether*-clauses:

*He wondered whether the mestizo had stolen his mule.* (FICT†)

*Police are not taking action until they know whether the men face charges.* (NEWS)

- *if*-clauses:

*Ask him when they were here last. See if he's got a tongue. See if he's such an idiot as he looks.* (FICT)

*One of the most common problems encountered is simply deciding if two components in a machine clash.* (ACAD)

In the above examples, it would be possible to change *whether* to *if*, and vice versa, without changing the meaning. Notice that this use of *if* is different from *if*

as a subordinator in adverbial conditional clauses (see 11.9.1), such as the following:

*I would've died if I was in there.* (CONV)

Adverbial *if*-clauses can be moved to initial position (e.g. *If I was in there, I would've died*). In contrast, interrogative *if* complement clauses cannot be moved.

With the verb *ask*, the *if/whether* clause functions as an indirect speech report of a *yes/no* question:

*I asked if she needed a ride.* (FICT)

<compare direct speech: *Do you need a ride?*>

Sometimes alternatives are offered by using *or* (*not*) with an *if/whether* clause:

*Mynors asked her whether they should go through the marketplace or along King Street.* (FICT†)

*I don't care whether you want to play an instrument or not.* (CONV)

The phrase *or not* can also directly follow the complementizer *whether*:

*We do not ask whether or not an axiom is 'true'.* (ACAD†)

*If* is less often used with *or* + alternative expressions:

*I don't know if she was upset or her eyes were watering because of the smoke.* (NEWS)

*It really doesn't matter if I'm a nice guy or not.* (NEWS)

When *if* is the complementizer, *or not* cannot follow it directly: ...\* *if or not I'm a nice guy*.

As many of the above examples illustrate, *whether/if* clauses are frequently used with a negative in the main clause. The verbs *care*, *matter*, *mind*, and *know* are especially common in the negative:

*I don't care if you're serious or not.* (CONV)

*Doesn't matter whether – whether it's a boy or a girl.* (CONV)

*I don't mind if the goals are spread around.* (NEWS)

### 10.11.1 Verbs controlling *whether*- and *if*-clauses

*If*-clauses are more common than *whether*-clauses as interrogative clauses. Verbs used commonly with *if*-clauses in conversation and fiction are *see*, *wonder*, and *know*; less frequent verbs include *ask*, *matter*, *mind*, *doubt*, *care*, and *remember*. *If*-clauses are generally rare in academic prose.

*Whether*-clauses, in contrast, occur more evenly across registers. *Know* + *whether*-clause is especially common in conversation, but many different verbs are used with moderate frequencies (e.g. *decide*, *see*, *mind*, *care*, *say*, *ask*). *Wonder* + *whether*-clause is relatively common in fiction, while *determine* + *whether*-clause is relatively common in academic prose. Several less common verbs are found primarily in academic prose with *whether*-clauses (e.g. *consider*, *establish*, *indicate*, *find out*).

*If*-clauses and *whether*-clauses are stylistically different. *If*-clauses are favored in more informal styles, so they are especially common in conversation and fiction, especially with *see* (= 'find out'), *wonder*, and *know*:

*Dad, try this on and see if it fits.* (CONV)

*I wonder if they will close our school down.* (CONV†)

*I don't really know if that's such a good idea.* (CONV)

## Review

Major points in GRAMMAR BITE C: *Wh*-clauses

- There are three major types of *wh*-clauses: interrogative, nominal relative, and exclamative.
- *Wh*-clauses can be complements of verbs, adjectives, or prepositions.
- *Wh*-complements can occur with or without a noun phrase between the verb and *wh*-clause.
- There are four types of verbs that are most common with *wh*-clauses: mental, speech act, other communication, and perception.
- *Whether* and *if* are used to introduce dependent interrogative clauses.
  - *If*-clauses are more common than *whether*-clauses, especially in conversation.
  - *Whether*-clauses are used with more formal discourse and with clauses that include choices with *or* and *or not*.

## GRAMMAR BITE

# D Post-predicate infinitive clauses

## 10.12 Overview of infinitive clauses

In general, infinitive clauses are more common in the written registers than in conversation. This is the opposite of the distribution of *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses, which are both most common in conversation.

Infinitive complement clauses serve a wide range of functions. They report speech and mental states, and they are also used to report intentions, desires, efforts, perceptions, and other general actions. They usually occur in post-predicate position, although they can also occur in subject position and in extraposed constructions. In this Grammar Bite, we concentrate on basic information about post-predicate *to*-clauses (including those that function as subject predicatives). Then, in Grammar Bite E, we describe other types of *to*-clauses.

## 10.13 Post-predicate *to*-clauses controlled by verbs

### 10.13.1 Grammatical patterns

There are five major grammatical patterns for post-predicate infinitive clauses following a verb:

- **Pattern 1: verb + *to*-clause** (e.g. *try*, *hope*)

*I'm just trying to get away early.* (CONV†)

*The new promoters hope to make prototypes at \$299,000 each.* (NEWS)

Pattern 1 is by far the most common pattern for *to*-clauses in all registers.

- **Pattern 2: verb + NP + *to*-clause** (e.g. *tell, believe, enable, expect*)

*It enables [the farmer] to maintain uniform and near constant conditions in the house.* (ACAD†)

Pattern 2 is moderately common in news and academic prose. Many verbs in Pattern 2 also have a corresponding passive form, which we can call **Pattern 2P: *be verb-ed* + *to*-clause:**

*PCBs are generally considered to be carcinogenic.* (ACAD)

<compare Pattern 2: *Researchers generally consider [PCBs] to be carcinogenic.*>

Pattern 2P is also moderately common in news and academic prose. In news, *be expected* is the most common verb in this pattern, while *be found* and *be required* are more common in academic prose:

*Heavy fighting with government troops was expected to break out soon.*  
(NEWS)

*Thus, paddy soils are found to be very dissimilar in chemical composition.* (ACAD†)

- **Pattern 3: verb + *for* NP + *to*-clause** (e.g. *ask, love, arrange, wait*)

*Hire a Daily Mirror van and wait for [Mrs Jones] to arrive.* (CONV†)

Pattern 3 is most common in American English conversation.

- **Pattern 4: verb + bare infinitive clause** (e.g. *dare, help, let*)

*The police didn't dare touch them because of United Nations.* (FICT†)

*It could have helped clarify a number of issues.* (NEWS†)

This pattern is rare in all of the registers of our corpus.

Some verbs that take Pattern 4—such as *dare* and *help*—also take Pattern 1:

*It could have helped to clarify a number of issues.*

- **Pattern 5: verb + NP + bare infinitive clause** (e.g. *have, feel, make, help, see*)

*I'll have [Judy] do it.* (CONV)

*He actually felt [the sweat] break out now on his forehead.* (FICT)

Pattern 5 is found primarily in conversation and fiction, but it is much less common than Patterns 1 and 2.

### 10.13.2 Meaning variations of *to*-clause patterns

#### A Pattern 1: verb + *to*-clause

In this pattern, the implied subject of the *to*-clause is usually the same as the subject of the main clause. To see this, you can compare a *to*-clause with an equivalent *that*-clause:

*I didn't claim to be an authority.* (CONV)

<compare: *I didn't claim that I was an authority.*>

*Widmer said he hoped to sell Brabham.* (NEWS†)

<compare: *Widmer said he hoped that he could sell Brabham.*>

The verb *say* is unusual in this pattern, however. With *say*, the implied subject of the *to*-clause is the speaker, rather than the subject of the main clause:

Mr Bryant said **to put it through to you.** (FICT)

<compare: Mr Bryant said **that I** <not he> **should put it through to you.**>

Jerry said **to tell you how sorry he is.** (FICT)

<compare: Jerry said **that I** <not he> **should tell you how sorry he is.**>

## B Pattern 2: verb + NP + to-clause

In Pattern 2, the roles of the NP and *to*-clause depend on the controlling verb. There are three variations.

**Variation 1:** This variation occurs with ditransitive verbs. In these sentences, the NP is both the indirect object of the main clause and the implied subject of the *to*-clause. The *to*-clause is the direct object of the main clause.

I told [grandma] **to make me and Tim some more.** (CONV†)

Here *grandma* is the indirect object of the main verb *told* as well as the implied subject of the *to*-clause (i.e. grandma should make me and Tim some more). Other examples of this type include:

I sprinkle a little around and tell [the demons] **to leave.** (NEWS)

He had persuaded [a woman] **to come into the laundry room of the house.** (FICT†)

**Variation 2:** This variation occurs with complex transitive verbs. In these sentences, the NP is the direct object of the main clause and also the implied subject of the *to*-clause. The *to*-clause is the object predicative of the main clause.

Rechem believes [the results] **to be unscientific.** (NEWS)

<compare: Rechem believes **that the results are unscientific.**>

Here the noun phrase *the results* functions as the direct object of *believes* as well as the implied subject of the *to*-clause. However, the *to*-clause is needed as object predicative to complete the main clause. In fact, it would give the opposite meaning to keep the direct object without the object predicative (i.e. 'Rechem believes the results').

This pattern occurs with mental verbs (e.g. *assume*, *believe*, *consider*, *understand*), verbs of intention, desire, and decision (e.g. *choose*, *expect*, *like*, *need*, *prefer*, *want*, *wish*), and verbs of discovery (e.g. *find*):

In a sense he considered [the trip] **to be a medical necessity.** (FICT)

She said that she would like [her mother] **to stay with her.** (ACAD)

In nylon he found [the Voigt average] **to be closest to experimental data.** (ACAD)

**Variation 3:** With these verbs, the NP functions as the indirect object of the main clause, but it is not the implied subject of the *to*-clause. Rather, the subject of the main clause is the implied subject of the *to*-clause. The only common verb with this pattern is *promise*:

Ollie has promised [Billy] **to take him fishing next Sunday.** (FICT)

<compare: Ollie has promised Billy **that he** <Ollie> **will take him** <Billy> **fishing.**>

You can see that here the implied subject of the *to*-clause is the subject of the main clause—Ollie.



**C Pattern 2P: NP + passive verb + *to*-clause**

We mentioned above that Pattern 2 can occur in the passive. Thus, the active voice form

NP<sub>1</sub> + verb + NP<sub>2</sub> + *to*-clause

has the corresponding passive structure:

NP<sub>2</sub> + passive verb + *to*-clause

Many verbs allow both the active and passive forms. For example:

active: [*We* NP<sub>1</sub>] assume [*the variable x* NP<sub>2</sub>] **to be subjective.** (ACAD†)

passive: [*An unemployed teenager sharing a house with the family* NP<sub>2</sub>] was assumed to have a separate, and often lower, income. (NEWS†)

active: [*He* NP<sub>1</sub>] did not believe [*this last remark* NP<sub>2</sub>] **to be true.** (FICT)

passive: [*Tens of thousands of phantom azalea bushes and geraniums* NP<sub>2</sub>] are believed to be alive and growing in the gardens of Northern Ireland. (NEWS)

However, no passive form is possible for some verbs that take Pattern 2, including *want*, *get*, *cause*, and *prefer*. In contrast, only the passive form is commonly used for some other verbs with *to*-clauses. These verbs include *be claimed*, *be said*, and *be thought*:

*The costs are claimed to be about 2.5bn.* (NEWS†)

*In Ceausescu's Romania, even the ashtrays are thought to have ears.*  
(NEWS†)

**D Pattern 3: verb + *for* NP + *to*-clause**

Most of the verbs that occur in Pattern 3 are prepositional verbs, such as *wait for*, *long for*, *call for*:

*She waited for the little antelope to protest.* (FICT†)

*The society called for consumers to take conservation measures to save water.* (NEWS†)

With these verbs, the preposition *for* is mandatory. However, a few verbs that express desire or preference can take an optional *for* + NP before the *to*-clause:

*I would like Sir Alec to carry on.* (FICT)

*But I would like for you to do one thing if you would.* (FICT)

*Certainly, but I should hate you to forget that he has scored more runs in Test cricket than any other Englishman.* (NEWS)

*I'd hate for all that stuff to go bad.* (CONV)

 **10.13.3 Verbs controlling post-predicate *to*-clauses**

Table 10.3 lists the most common verbs with post-predicate *to*-clauses, showing their semantic categories. The written registers use verbs from many different categories. In contrast, conversation uses far fewer verbs commonly; most of those are verbs of desire (e.g. *want*, *like*), plus the verbs *seem* and *try*.

The combination *want* + *to*-clause is extremely common in conversation, where speakers often express their own desires or the desires of others:

*I don't want to have a broken nose.* (CONV)

Table 10.3 Verbs controlling infinitive clauses in post-predicate position, by semantic domain

common = over 20 occurrences per million words

occasional = attested in corpus but less than 20 occurrences per million words

pattern	verbs
<b>for speech act and other communication verbs:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + to-clause	occasional: <i>ask, beg, claim, decline, offer, promise, prove, request, say</i>
Pattern 2: verb + NP + to-clause	common: <i>ask, prove</i> occasional: <i>advise, beg, beseech, call, challenge, command, convince, invite, promise, remind, report, request, show, teach, tell, urge, warn</i>
Pattern 2P: passive verb + to-clause	common: <i>be asked</i> occasional: <i>be claimed, be proved/proven, be said, be told</i>
Pattern 3: verb + for NP + to-clause	occasional: <i>ask, call, pray</i>
<b>for cognition verbs:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + to-clause	common: <i>learn</i> occasional: <i>expect, forget, pretend, remember</i>
Pattern 2: verb + NP + to-clause	common: <i>expect, find</i> occasional: <i>assume, believe, consider, estimate, imagine, judge, know, presume, suppose, take, trust, understand</i>
Pattern 2P: passive verb + to-clause	common: <i>be expected</i> occasional: <i>be found, be thought</i>
<b>for perception verbs:</b>	
Pattern 2: verb + NP + to-clause	occasional: <i>see</i>
Pattern 2P: passive verb + to-clause	occasional: <i>be felt, be heard</i>
Pattern 5: verb + NP + bare infinitive clause	occasional: <i>feel, hear, see, watch</i>
<b>for verbs of desire:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + to-clause	common: <i>hope, like, need, want, wish</i> occasional: <i>(cannot) bear, care, dare, desire, dread, hate, love, long, prefer, regret, (cannot) stand</i>
Pattern 2: verb + NP + to-clause	common: <i>want</i> occasional: <i>dare, dread, hate, like, love, need, prefer, wish</i>
Pattern 3: verb + for NP + to-clause	occasional: <i>(cannot) bear, care, dread, hate, like, love, long, prefer, (cannot) stand</i>
Pattern 4: verb + bare infinitive clause	occasional: <i>dare</i>
<b>for verbs of intention or decision:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + to-clause	common: <i>agree, decide, intend, mean, prepare</i> occasional: <i>aim, consent, choose, hesitate, look, plan, refuse, resolve, threaten, volunteer, wait</i>

Table 10.3 continued

pattern	verbs
Pattern 2: verb + NP + <i>to</i> -clause	occasional: <i>choose, design, intend, mean, prepare, schedule</i>
Pattern 2P: passive verb + <i>to</i> -clause	common: <i>be prepared</i>
Pattern 3: verb + <i>for</i> NP + <i>to</i> -clause	occasional: <i>agree, consent, intend, look, mean, plan, wait</i>
<b>for verbs of modality or causation:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + <i>to</i> -clause	common: <i>get</i> occasional: <i>afford, arrange, deserve, help, vote</i>
Pattern 2: verb + NP + <i>to</i> -clause	common: <i>allow, enable, require</i> occasional: <i>appoint, assist, authorize, cause, compel, counsel, defy, drive, elect, encourage, entitle, forbid, force, get, help, inspire, instruct, lead, leave, oblige, order, permit, persuade, prompt, raise, summon, tempt</i>
Pattern 2P: passive verb + <i>to</i> -clause	common: <i>be allowed, be enabled, be made, be required</i>
Pattern 3: verb + <i>for</i> NP + <i>to</i> -clause	occasional: <i>allow, arrange</i>
Pattern 4: verb + bare infinitive clause	occasional: <i>help, let, make to (with)</i>
Pattern 5: verb + NP + bare infinitive clause	occasional: <i>have, help, let, make</i>
<b>for verbs of effort:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + <i>to</i> -clause	common: <i>attempt, fail, manage, try</i> occasional: <i>bother, endeavor, seek, strive, struggle, venture</i>
<b>for verbs of aspect:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + <i>to</i> -clause	common: <i>begin, continue, start</i> occasional: <i>cease, commence, proceed</i>
<b>for verbs of probability or simple fact:</b>	
Pattern 1: verb + <i>to</i> -clause	common: <i>appear, seem, tend</i> occasional: <i>come, happen, turn out</i>

*I wanted to go and get something.* (CONV)

*He probably wants to speak to you.* (CONV)

Speakers also often question the desires of people they are speaking to:

*Do you want to go in the water?* (CONV)

In fictional dialog, the verb *want* is also extremely common with these same functions:

*I want to jump into a tub of hot water first.* (FICT)

*Do you want to come along?* (FICT)

Verbs of effort are most common in fiction and news, where they typically report people's attempts or failures:

*She had failed to appear in court.* (FICT)

*Military officers have tried to seize power six times.* (NEWS†)

Aspectual verbs are also most common in fiction and news. They typically report the state of progression for an activity or process:

*He continued to stare at her.* (FICT)

*Even ambulance staff not suspended are beginning to feel the pinch.*  
(NEWS†)

The verbs *tend* and *appear*, expressing likelihood, occur most frequently in academic prose:

*The cloud tended to flatten into a disk.* (ACAD)

*Neither the sex nor the strain of donor rats appears to be important.*  
(ACAD)

These are **raising** structures, to be described in Grammar Bite D.

Finally, it is worth noting that verbs of modality/causation, even though they are not common overall, are common with *to*-clauses in academic prose:

*An autumn-like pattern, or even a constant day length, will allow the body to develop properly before the bird starts laying.* (ACAD)

## 10.14 Subject predicative *to*-clauses



*To*-clauses acting as subject predicatives are relatively common in the written registers. They are similar to *that*-clauses as subject predicatives. They occur after a copular verb and identify or describe the subject of the main clause. The subject (marked in [ ]) is typically abstract:

*[Their hope] is to succeed as the consolidator of post-Thatcherism.*  
(NEWS)

*[Their function] is to detect the cries of predatory bats.* (ACAD)

There are four major uses of subject predicative *to*-clauses:

- framing points in a discussion:

*[A fourth challenge] is to develop management arrangements within hospitals.* (NEWS)

*[The first step in any such calculation] is to write the equation for the reaction.* (ACAD)

- introducing an aim, objective, plan, goal, purpose, strategy, task, or idea:

*[Our major aim] is to reach beginning students in geology.* (ACAD†)

*[The plan] is to turn Ross into a mini-conglomerate.* (NEWS†)

*[The purpose of this chapter] is to describe some of the available techniques.* (ACAD†)

- introducing a methodology:

*[The best method for recovering eggs] is to use the flushing method described in Section 2.2.* (ACAD)

*[An alternative technique for this stage of oocyte maturation] is to collect freshly ovulated oocytes from the fallopian tubes.* (ACAD)

- making a balanced sentence structure when a *to*-clause is also subject of the main clause:

[To be European in France] *is to think globally about a French-led political Europe which will challenge the power of Japan and America.*  
(NEWS)

## 10.15 Post-predicate to-clauses controlled by adjectives

Adjectives with post-predicate *to*-clauses include:

very common: (un)likely

moderately common: (un)able, determined, difficult, due, easy, free, glad, hard, ready, used, (un)willing

selected other adjectives:

certainty: certain, sure

ability or willingness: anxious, careful, eager, fit, hesitant, inclined, obliged, prepared, quick, ready, reluctant, (all) set, slow

emotion or stance: afraid, amazed, angry, annoyed, ashamed, astonished, careful, concerned, curious, delighted, disappointed, disgusted, embarrassed, furious, grateful, happy, impatient, nervous, pleased, proud, sorry, surprised, worried

ease or difficulty: awkward, (un)pleasant, (im)possible, tough

evaluation: bad, brave, careless, crazy, expensive, good, lucky, mad, nice, right, silly, smart, (un)wise, wrong

The adjectives that control *to*-clauses fall into five semantic categories.

### A Degree of certainty

These adjectives express the likelihood or certainty of the idea in the *to*-clause:

*I'm certain to regret it.* (FICT)

*He's liable to be a bit amorous.* (CONV)

*He was sure to see the old woman hopping about.* (FICT†)

Likely and unlikely are the most common adjectives in this group:

*Mr. Adams said there were unlikely to be enough volunteers.* (NEWS†)

*They are likely to have been made by different processes.* (ACAD†)

### B Ability or willingness

These adjectives express the ability, preparedness, or commitment to the action specified in the *to*-clause:

*He doesn't seem willing to move out.* (CONV)

*I'm ready to take over in Dave's place.* (FICT†)

*The embryos are less inclined to skid about.* (ACAD†)

### C Emotion or stance

These adjectives express a feeling or emotional reaction to the idea in the *to*-clause. Many different stance adjectives occur with *to*-clauses:

*Not everybody's going to be glad to have him around.* (FICT†)

*I'm sorry to hear about you.* (CONV)

*Gabby was afraid to say anything more.* (FICT)

### D Ease or difficulty

These adjectives give the speaker's assessment of how difficult or easy a task is. The task is described in the *to*-clause. *Easy*, *difficult*, and *hard* are the most common adjectives in this group:

*They're easy to steal.* (CONV)

*Jobs were hard to come by.* (FICT†)

*PCBs are biologically difficult to degrade.* (ACAD†)

### E Evaluation

These adjectives give an evaluation of an action or situation that is described in the *to*-clause. No adjectives in this group are especially common with *to*-clauses:

*This one is nice to smell.* (CONV†)

*Katherine was smart to have her wits about her.* (FICT†)

*This food wouldn't be bad to wake up to.* (FICT†)

The evaluation adjectives are slightly different from stance adjectives. Stance adjectives express the feelings of the person identified as the subject of the sentence: e.g. *glad*, *afraid*, *sorry*. Evaluation adjectives provide an external evaluation of the entire proposition. For evaluation adjectives, a paraphrase can often be given with a subject *to*-clause. For example:

*To smell this one is nice.*

## Review

Major points in GRAMMAR BITE D: Post-predicate infinitive clauses

- By far the most common position for *to*-clauses is post-predicate.
- There are five major patterns for *to*-clauses controlled by a verb in post-predicate position.
  - The patterns vary in the way noun phrases come between the verb and *to*-clause, and in the choice of *to* or a bare infinitive.
  - Some factors to consider in the grammatical patterns with *to*-clauses are: passive alternatives, the implied subject of the *to*-clause, the relationship between the object of the main clause and the *to*-clause, and prepositional verbs.
  - The semantic category of a verb often influences the grammatical patterns that are possible for that verb.
- The verbs that are common with *to*-clauses vary across registers and cover many semantic categories.
  - Conversation has the least variation. Here *want* + *to*-clause is extremely common.
  - The other registers have more variation, including more verbs of effort (e.g. *try*), of aspect (e.g. *begin*, *continue*), of probability (e.g. *tend*), and of causation (e.g. *allow*).
- Subject predicative *to*-clauses have four major functions: introducing points, introducing objectives or plans, introducing methodologies, and making a balanced structure when a *to*-clause is also the subject of the main clause.
- *Likely/unlikely* is the only adjective that commonly controls a *to*-clause.

- Many other adjectives occur, conveying certainty, ability, stance, ease/difficulty, or evaluation.

## GRAMMAR BITE

## E More on infinitive clauses

### 10.16 Raising

#### 10.16.1 Subject-to-subject raising with *to*-clauses controlled by verbs

In Grammar Bite D, we noted that the implied subject of most post-predicate *to*-clauses is the same as the subject of the main clause. However, in some cases, the entire *to*-clause is the implied subject of the main clause. For example:

- 1 *The prize pupil, however, turned out to have another side to his character.* (NEWS)

The equivalent *that*-clause construction is an extraposed construction:

- 1a *It turned out that the prize pupil had another side to his character.*

You can see here that the grammatical subject of the main clause in 1 (*the prize pupil*) is the implied subject of the *to*-clause (the prize pupil is the one who had another side to his character). This is similar to most *to*-clauses. However, the logical subject of the main clause is the entire *to*-clause. That is, the intended meaning is not that 'the prize pupil turned out'; rather, the entire idea that 'the prize pupil had another side to his character' is the logical subject of the main clause.

This kind of structure is called subject-to-subject raising. The subject of the dependent *to*-clause is 'raised' to become the subject of the main clause. Subject-to-subject raising occurs with *to*-complement clauses controlled by verbs of probability and simple fact (e.g. *turn out, seem, tend, appear*). However, these structures occur more commonly with *to*-clauses controlled by adjectives, as described in the next section.

#### 10.16.2 Raising with *to*-clauses controlled by adjectives

On the surface, *to*-clauses controlled by adjectives all appear the same. However, the implied subject of the *to*-clause and its relationship to the subject of the main clause can vary.

In the simplest case, the implied subject of the *to*-clause is the same as the subject of the main clause. For example:

- Millar was obstinately determined to change the content of education.*  
(NEWS)

However, there are two major groups of adjectives that differ from this simple case: certainty adjectives and adjectives of ease or difficulty.

### A Certainty adjectives controlling subject-to-subject raising

Like the probability verbs in 10.16.1, certainty adjectives (such as *likely*, *unlikely*, *sure*, *certain*) occur with subject-to-subject raising. For example:

1 [The government] is unlikely to meet the full cost. (NEWS)

Here the grammatical subject of the main clause (*the government*) is the implied subject of the *to*-clause. However, the logical subject of the main clause is the entire *to*-clause. This meaning relationship becomes explicit if we paraphrase the structure with an equivalent *that*-clause. Actually, there are two possible paraphrases, one in subject position and the other extraposed:

1a *That the government will meet the full cost is unlikely.*

1b *It is unlikely that the government will meet the full cost.*

With both paraphrases, we see that the full complement clause functions as the logical subject of the main clause.

### B Adjectives of ease or difficulty controlling object-to-subject raising

Adjectives of ease or difficulty (e.g. *difficult*, *easy*, *hard*, *(im)possible*) control a different type of raising. Consider this sentence:

*Without those powers, [computer hacking] would be almost impossible to prove.* (NEWS†)

Here the grammatical subject of the main clause is the implied object of the *to*-clause. In this example, *computer hacking* (subject of the main clause) is the understood object of *prove* (the infinitive). In addition, the logical subject of the main clause is the *to*-clause. The sentence does not mean ‘computer hacking would be almost impossible’. Rather, it means:

*To prove computer hacking would be almost impossible.*

You can see that the subject in this restatement consists of the *to*-clause and its implied object *to prove computer hacking*.

This kind of structure is called object-to-subject raising. The object of the dependent *to*-clause is ‘raised’ to become the subject of the main clause.

The implied subject of the *to*-clause with these raising structures is generic. For instance, the above example means that it is impossible for *anyone* or *people generally* to prove computer hacking.

## 10.17 Extraposed *to*-clauses



There are few verbs that control extraposed *to*-clauses. The most common is the copula *be* combined with a subject predicative noun phrase or prepositional phrase:

*It is still an adventure to travel down the canyon of the Colorado river in a small boat.* (ACAD)

<compare: *To travel down the canyon of the Colorado river in a small boat is still an adventure.*>



*It is for others to offer moral guidance to the newly prosperous Pharisees.* (NEWS)

<compare: *To offer moral guidance to the newly prosperous Pharisees is for others.*>

In general, though, extrapolated *to*-clauses controlled by verbs are rare.

In contrast, there are many adjectives that can control extrapolated *to*-clauses; these forms are found especially in news and academic prose.

Adjectives taking extrapolated *to*-clauses come from three major semantic domains: necessity and importance adjectives, ease and difficulty adjectives, and evaluation adjectives. The adjectives in all three classes are used to mark a stance towards the proposition in the *to*-clause.

The most common necessity or importance adjectives controlling extrapolated *to*-clauses are *essential*, *important*, *interesting*, *necessary*, *vital*:

*If you want peace it is important to stay cool.* (NEWS)

*I'm sure it's not necessary to ask you not to pass any information on to the Communists.* (NEWS)

*If the development of the unit spans a long period it will be essential to make use of the new developments of this kind.* (ACAD)

Adjectives marking ease or difficulty can control extrapolated *to*-clauses as well as *to*-clauses in post-predicate position (with object-to-subject raising; see 10.16.2). The most common ease or difficulty adjectives are (*im*)*possible*, *difficult*, *easy*, *easier*, *hard*, and *tough*:

*Moreover, it is notoriously difficult to predict the costs of major infrastructural projects.* (NEWS†)

*It is easy to see that the model ignores some fundamentally important variables.* (ACAD†)

*It may be tough to attract people.* (NEWS†)

*It is possible to love, and to aid thy neighbor, without state intervention.* (NEWS)

Evaluation adjectives come from two major subclasses: adjectives expressing general goodness or badness, and adjectives marking some specific evaluation or assessment. The border between these two semantic domains is not always clear-cut. Adjectives marking goodness or badness indicate a generalized stance towards the proposition in the extrapolated *to*-clause. These adjectives include: *bad*, *best*, *better*, *good*, *nice*, *wonderful*, *worse*. For example:

*It's good to see them in the bath.* (CONV†)

*It was bad to be prodigal.* (FICT†)

Several other adjectives express more specific evaluations, including: (*in*)*appropriate*, *awkward*, *convenient*, *desirable*, *improper*, (*un*)*reasonable*, *safe*, *smart*, *stupid*, *surprising*, *useful*, *useless*, *wise*, *wrong*. For example:

*It was awkward to move elbows and clap in such a crowd of people.* (FICT)

*For the purposes of this paper it is convenient to consider four major categories of uncertainty.* (ACAD†)

*It's not safe to run down there.* (FICT)

*However, for our purposes it is useful to emphasize three roles.* (ACAD)

### 10.17.1 Extraposed v. subject position *to*-clauses

In many cases, a subject *to*-clause can be rephrased as an extraposed clause, and vice versa. In general, extraposition is the normal choice, with subject *to*-clauses being reserved for special functions. Three major factors influence this choice: register, information flow, and grammatical complexity.

#### A Register

Subject *to*-clauses are rare in all registers. When they do occur, they are used primarily in academic prose. Extraposed *to*-clauses are much more common, although they are also primarily used in expository writing.

#### B Information flow

In almost all cases, subject *to*-clauses are used for given information, creating cohesion with the previous discourse.

*The law also allowed the seizure of all assets, not simply those related to a specific offence. 'The US law in this respect seems greatly excessive', he said. 'To take away the profits of crime is one thing; to seize the assets that have no connection with crime is another.'* (NEWS†)

In this example, the ideas in the subject *to*-clauses (taking away the profits of crime and seizing the assets that have no connection with crime) directly follow from the preceding explanation of the law.

In addition, the above example shows how subject *to*-clauses are sometimes used in parallel to present a balance of connected ideas. This parallel structure can create a strong impact:

*He advanced into the room and sat in the armchair. I felt incensed, yet helpless. To order him to leave would be overdramatic yet perhaps I should. To pull the bell-rope and ask for help would be even more so.* (FICT)

#### C Grammatical complexity of the rest of the clause

In most cases when a subject *to*-clause is used, the rest of the clause is a complex construction, as in:

1 *To accept a US mediation plan means [that the Israeli-Palestinian meeting is now likely in the New Year].* (NEWS)

The most common construction of this type is an equation of two *to*-clauses:

2 *To expect Europe to become a single warm cultural bath is simply [to mistake the nature of the European identity].* (NEWS†)

3 *To argue otherwise is [to betray millions of people].* (NEWS)

Extraposed constructions are usually not a practical alternative with such complex predicates, because they would be very difficult to follow. (A similar point was about subject *that*-clauses in 10.8.1.) For example, compare the following extraposed examples to 1 and 2 above:

1a *It means that the Israeli-Palestinian meeting is now likely in the New Year to accept a US mediation plan.*

- 2a *It is simply to mistake the nature of the European identity to expect Europe to become a single warm cultural bath.*

## 10.18 Raising v. extraposition

### 10.18.1 Subject-to-subject raising v. extraposed *that*-clauses

Complement clauses controlled by verbs of probability and simple fact (e.g. *seem*, *appear*), passive voice mental verbs (e.g. *be found*, *be assumed*), and adjectives of certainty (e.g. *likely*, *unlikely*, *certain*, *sure*) have two alternative forms: a *to*-clause with subject-to-subject raising or an extraposed *that*-clause. For example:

- 1 *The rate for the North American continent has been estimated to be about 0.3 mm/year.* (ACAD)
- 1a *It is has been estimated **that the rate for the North American continent is about 0.03 mm/year**.*

In all four registers, the *to*-clause structure with subject-to-subject raising (1) is much more common. One reason for the choice of the raised *to*-clauses concerns information flow. In most constructions with subject-to-subject raising, the main clause subject (marked in [I]) is given information that refers directly back to the topic of the previous discourse:

- Andy really surprises me. <...> [Andy] seems to know everything.* (CONV)  
*The first thing he thought of when he woke up was Marge. <...> [She] wasn't likely to take a taxi to Naples.* (FICT)

The raised construction allows the sentence to follow the typical information pattern of English: given information comes before new, and the given information is placed in subject position (see 12.1.1).

Extraposed *that*-clauses are used when it is important to mark modality or tense in the complement clause (since these cannot be marked with a *to*-clause). For example:

- It is likely that North Korea will channel investment to areas that can be contained.* (NEWS)  
*It is perhaps more likely that they were associated with locomotion from the beginning.* (ACAD†)

In addition, extraposed constructions are preferred when a prepositional phrase occurs between the verb and the *that*-clause:

- 2 *It seemed [to him] that his home life was disintegrating all at once.* (FICT)
- 3 *It appears [from initial observations] that the storage of viable sperm is limited to a period of two or three months.* (ACAD†)

The alternative *to*-clause constructions with raising sound more awkward, with the prepositional phrase disrupting the association between the verb and the *to*-clause:

- 2a *His home life seemed to him to be disintegrating all at once.*

## 10.18.2 Object-to-subject raising v. extraposed *to*-clauses controlled by adjectives

Adjectives of ease or difficulty are used with both post-predicate *to*-clauses and with extraposed *to*-clauses:

1 They're hard to get. (CONV†)

1a It is hard to get them.

*Easy*, *hard*, *difficult*, and (*im*)*possible* are the most common adjectives occurring in these constructions. Object-to-subject raising (1) and extraposition (1a) occur in all registers, with the raised structures being only slightly more common.

The strongest factor influencing this choice is again information flow. In almost all structures with object-to-subject raising, the implied object of the *to*-clause (which is the grammatical subject of the main clause) presents given information. It provides a link with the immediately preceding discourse:

A: And then I fell out of the swing.

B: [That] wasn't easy to do. (CONV)


The second approach <...> necessitates the building of special-purpose assembly and iterative routines. <...> [This] is difficult to achieve on current commercial turnkey systems. (ACAD)

In contrast, extraposed structures are used when the object of the *to*-clause presents new information. The extraposed *to*-clauses also usually have long, complex objects. These structures follow the end-weight principle: longer, more complex structures tend to be placed later in a clause (see 12.1.4):

It is difficult to imagine a direct advantage conferred by shell banding for survival in waveswept conditions. (ACAD†)

It is easy to see (Figure 4–11) that for a folded sequence of layers, the oldest beds would be found at depth in the core (or central axis) of the anticline and the youngest rocks. (ACAD†)

## 10.19 *To*-clause types across registers

 The distribution of *to*-clause types reflects their different discourse functions (Table 10.4). Over 60 per cent of all *to*-clauses occur in post-predicate position controlled by a verb. These *to*-clauses typically are used to report the activities, aspirations, thoughts, and emotions of human participants:

I wanted to do it. (CONV)

Dr. Gruner asked Uncle Sammler to read a few items from the Market Letter. (FICT)

Mrs. Carol Bentley tried to ignore the fuss. (NEWS†)

Carpenter found highly nonlinear cases to be chaotic. (ACAD†)

Because conversation, fiction, and news focus on such concerns, post-predicate *to*-clauses controlled by verbs are most common in those registers.

*To*-clauses controlled by adjectives more often describe a state, often presenting a stance toward the idea in the *to*-clause. These structures are one of the main devices for expressing stance in the written expository registers.

Table 10.4 Types of *to*-clause complements across registers

	CONV	FICT	NEWS	ACAD
post-predicate <i>to</i> -clause complementing a verb	common	very common	very common	common
post-predicate <i>to</i> -clause complementing an adjective	rare	moderately common	common	moderately common
extraposed <i>to</i> -clause complementing a verb	rare	rare	relatively rare	rare
extraposed <i>to</i> -clause complementing an adjective	rare	moderately common	moderately common	common
subject <i>to</i> -clause	rare	rare	rare	rare
subject-predicative <i>to</i> -clause	rare	moderately common	moderately common	moderately common

Post-predicate *to*-clauses controlled by adjectives often express a person's stance towards his or her own activities. This pattern is relatively common in news:

*Sir Anthony is willing to provide a focal point for discussion.* (NEWS†)

*Advertisers said they were delighted to see many of their proposals reflected in the Government's approach.* (NEWS)

In contrast, extraposed *to*-clauses following an adjective most often present a stance that is not directly attributed to anyone. This pattern is most common in academic prose:

*It is important to specify the states after the formulae in the equation.* (ACAD)

*It is difficult to maintain a consistent level of surgical anesthesia with ether.* (ACAD†)

## Review

Major points in Grammar Bite E: More on infinitive clauses

- Raising describes the relationship between the main clause subject and the *to*-clause.
  - *To*-clauses controlled by verbs can have subject-to-subject raising.
  - *To*-clauses controlled by adjectives can have subject-to-subject or object-to-subject raising.
- Extraposed *to*-clauses are most often controlled by an adjective.
  - Extraposed clauses are more common than subject position clauses.
  - The choice of subject position rather than extraposed is related to register, cohesion and information structure, the complexity of the main clause predicate, and individual style.
- *To*-clauses with raising are alternatives to some extraposed constructions.
  - With certain verbs and adjectives, *to*-clauses with raising are more common than extraposed *that*-clauses. This choice is usually due to information structure.

- Adjectives of ease or difficulty are slightly more common with raised *to*-clauses than extraposed *to*-clauses. Again, information structure and cohesion are important to the choice.
- The different types of *to*-clauses have different frequencies across the registers, which reflect their functions.
  - Post-predicate *to*-clauses are most common in conversation, fiction, and news. They usually report activities, desires, and thoughts of humans.
  - *To*-clauses controlled by adjectives are most common in news and academic prose. They usually describe a state or an attitude.

## GRAMMAR BITE

## F *Ing*-clauses, ellipsis/substitution, and review

### 10.20 Overview of *ing*-clauses

Like *that*-complement clauses and *to*-complement clauses, *ing*-complement clauses serve a wide range of functions. They are used most often with verbs like *begin*, *start*, and *stop* to convey aspect, but they are also used to report speech acts, cognitive states, perceptions, emotions, and other actions. Overall, *ing*-clauses are more common in the written registers than in conversation.

*Ing*-clauses are most common in post-predicative position, where they can be controlled by verbs and adjectives:

*Gizmo keeps trying to persuade me to go with her.* (CONV)

*I could see she was confident of handling any awkward situation that might arise.* (FICT†)

In many cases the adjectives are followed by prepositions, like *confident of* in the above example.

*Ing*-clauses can also occur in subject position:

*Reflecting on this and related matters took him past his stop and almost into Dinedor itself.* (FICT)

And they can occur as subject predicatives:

*Sometimes being loud is being obnoxious.* (CONV)

### 10.21 Post-predicate *ing*-clauses

#### 10.21.1 Grammatical patterns for *ing*-clauses controlled by verbs

There are three major grammatical patterns for *ing*-complement clauses in post-predicate position:

- **Pattern 1: verb + *ing*-clause** (e.g. *begin*, *remember*)

1 He began **paging through old newspapers**. (FICT†)

2 I remember **reading this book**. (CONV)

In Pattern 1, the implied subject of the *ing*-clause is the subject of the main clause. Thus, in 1, *he* was *paging through old newspapers*, and in 2, *I* was *reading this book*. The exception to this meaning relationship is with verbs that express a required action, such as *need*:

*Oh you know that front room really needs **painting***. (CONV)

Here the subject of the main clause (*that front room*) is the implied object of the *ing*-clause, while the implied subject of the *ing*-clause is a general noun (such as *someone*); that is, the intended meaning is that ‘someone needs to paint that front room’.

- **Pattern 2: verb + NP + *ing*-clause** (e.g. *see*, *find*)

3 When you see [*a geek*] **walking down the street**, give it a good throw. (CONV)

4 Don't be surprised to find [*me*] **sitting on the tee in the lotus position**. (NEWS)

In this pattern, the noun phrase after the verb (marked in [] in 3 and 4) functions as the logical subject of the *ing*-clause. For example, in 3, *a geek* is walking down the street. The noun phrase + *ing*-clause can be considered the object of the main clause verb.

- **Pattern 2a: verb + possessive determiner + *ing*-clause**

Some Pattern 2 verbs allow a possessive determiner + *ing*-clause. Thus compare:

*Did you mind [*me*] **saying it**, Stephen?* (FICT) <Pattern 2>

*And maybe you won't mind [*my*] **saying that you're getting a little old for studying***. (FICT) <Pattern 2a with possessive determiner>

When the possessive alternative is used, it focuses attention on the action described in the *ing*-clause. In contrast, the regular NP form puts more emphasis on the person doing the action:

*I appreciate [*your*] **being here***. (FICT)

*We couldn't picture [*you*] **walking so far***. (FICT)

Prescriptive tradition favors the possessive form. However, in practice over 90 per cent of Pattern 2 *ing*-clauses take the regular NP form. Further, many verbs do not allow the possessive alternative, such as *keep*, *have*, *leave*, *find*, *catch*.

- **Pattern 3: prepositional verb + *ing*-clause**

Many *ing*-clauses occur with **prepositional verbs**:

We were thinking of **bringing our video camera**. (CONV)

She complained of **feeling feverish** and went early to bed. (FICT)

It also assists in **helping to buffer the indoor environment against sudden fluctuations outside**. (NEWS)

Here the *ing*-clause acts as object of the prepositional verb.



### 10.21.2 Verbs controlling *ing*-clauses

The most common verbs controlling *ing*-clauses, broken down by the four registers, are:

CONV: *keep, start, go, stop, see NP, remember, think (about/of), get NP, sit*

FICT: *keep, see NP, go, start, stop, begin, hear NP, come, spend, remember, think (about/of), get NP, sit, feel NP, stand/stood*

NEWS: *start, keep, begin, see NP, go, spend, come, stop, be accused of*

ACAD: *be used for, involve, be achieved by/with*

Overall, the most common verb + *ing*-clause construction is with *keep* in conversation. *Start* + *ing*-clause is also very common in conversation. In academic prose, the combination *be used for* + *ing*-clause is surprisingly common.

Verbs of aspect or manner are the most common verbs controlling *ing*-clauses, especially in conversation and fiction. The verb *keep* shows that the action in the *ing*-clause is continuous or repeated.

She keeps **smelling the washing powder**. (CONV)

His brake lights keep **flashing on**. (CONV†)

A more informal near-synonym is *go on*:

The guard went on **sleeping**. (FICT†)

The verbs *start* and *stop* show the beginning or ending of an activity. They are frequent in both conversation and fiction. The more formal-sounding *begin* is common only in fiction:

You can start **doing what you want then**. (CONV)

A dog began **barking**. (FICT)

Ralph had stopped **smiling**. (FICT†)

The verbs *go*, *come*, *sit*, and *stand* are commonly used with *ing*-clauses to describe the manner in which an action was done. They are most common in fiction. *Go* and *come* indicate the direction of movement (towards or away from a place):

I went **looking for it**. (CONV)

One of the children came **running after him**. (FICT)

*Sit* and *stand* denote unmoving states that are further described in the *ing*-clause:

All morning they sat **waiting in the sun**. (FICT†)

The two police guards stood **peering in the direct of the commotion**. (FICT†)

The verbs *see* and *hear* are commonly used to describe the perception of an activity:



*I suddenly saw water **rushing down the wall**.* (CONV)

*They could hear the waves **breaking on the rocks**.* (FICT)

With all the above verbs, the following *ing*-clause has a meaning of ‘activity in progress’, related to the use of the *ing*-form with progressive aspect (see 6.3, 6.5). For example, in the sentence *the children came running*, the verb *running* expresses the meaning of ongoing activity, similar to the main clause progressive form *the children were running*.

News and academic prose have more specialized sets of verbs that commonly control *ing*-clauses. Verbs that describe processes and states (*be used for*, *involve*) and effort (*be achieved by/with*) are most common:

*Some method of refrigeration is used for **cooling the milk in all bulk tanks**.* (ACAD)

*This is achieved by **saving information at the beginning of the subroutine**.* (ACAD†)

News is notable for using *ing*-clauses with verbs having to do with criminal offenses and punishments, such as *accused of* and *charged with*:

*George Helaine, a Belgian, is accused of **organizing the shipment from Morocco**.* (NEWS†)

*All are charged with **violating official secrets laws**.* (NEWS†)

Many other kinds of verbs occur with moderate frequencies controlling *ing*-clauses. For example, communication and speech act verbs give indirect reports of statements:

*They talk about **building more**.* (CONV)

*She had never mentioned **having a religion**.* (FICT)

Cognition verbs tell of a mental state or process, which is specified by the *ing*-clause:

*I don't even remember **telling you that**.* (CONV)

*I can't conceive of somebody **getting killed and injuring another person because of being too damn stupid to drive carefully**.* (FICT†) <note: *damn* is a taboo word and may be offensive to some people>

Stance verbs tell the speaker/writer's feelings or attitudes towards the idea in the *ing*-clause:

*I hate **doing that**.* (CONV)

*He immediately regretted **thinking any such thought**.* (FICT)

Finally, a few verbs show facilitation or effort:

*Well he couldn't help **being a miserable sod**.* (CONV) <note: *sod* is a taboo word and may be offensive to some people>

*You ought to try **taking some of them**.* (CONV)



### 10.21.3 Adjectives controlling *ing*-clauses

Most adjectives that control *ing*-clauses express a personal feeling or attitude, or some evaluation of the idea in the *ing*-clause:

*It is true that young rabbits are great migrants and capable of **journeying for miles**.* (FICT)

*I'm sorry about **being in a mood Saturday**.* (CONV)

*These people were not afraid of signing papers.* (FICT†)

*There is no reason why women should not be good at selling cars.* (NEWS)

*Mineralogy and texture are also useful in subdividing the sedimentary rocks.* (ACAD)

In most cases, as in these examples, the controlling adjective is followed by a preposition.

## 10.22 Ellipsis and substitution in complement clauses



### 10.22.1 Ellipsis in post-predicate *to*- and *wh*-clauses

Various forms of ellipsis or substitution can be used with post-predicate complement clauses when the content is clear from the preceding discourse. Ellipsis can occur with *to*-clauses and *wh*-clauses, where the complement clause is omitted but the complementizer (*to* or a *wh*-word) is retained:

A: *Are we having that tonight too?*

B: *If you want **to**.* (CONV)

<meaning: *If you want **to have that tonight**.*>

*He fell asleep up there – I don't know **how**.* (CONV)

<meaning: *I don't know **how he fell asleep up there**.*>

Ellipsis with complement clauses is most common in conversation. (See 13.5 for further discussion of ellipsis in conversation.) However, even though most verbs can occur with ellipsis, very few do so frequently. Each type of complement clause has a single verb that is by far most common with this type of ellipsis:

- *want + to*: *You can go if you **want to**.* (CONV)
- *know + wh-word*: *I couldn't fall asleep till four last night – I don't **know why**.* (CONV)

In addition, *try* and *like* are moderately common with an ellipsed *to*-clause. *Like + to* usually follows the modal verb *would*:

A: *Keep him in line.*

B: *I'll **try to**.* (CONV)

A: *Did you use my toothbrush again?*

B: *Well, I **would like to**.* (CONV)

With *wh*-clause ellipsis, *wonder* and *remember* also occur:

A: *I took a shower early this morning and I feel like I didn't shower.*

B: *I **wonder why**.* (CONV)

With *that*-clauses, ellipsis involves the omission of the entire complement clause, including the complementizer *that*. Such ellipsis is usually found with extremely common verbs like *think*, *know*, and *guess* (in American English):

A: *Hey, look!*

B: *Yeah, but there's seven teams in front of them dad.*

A: *Yeah, I **know**, but mm I don't mind that.* (CONV)

### 10.22.2 Substitution in post-predicate *that*-clauses

With post-predicate *that*-clauses, substitution can also occur. The substitute form *so* or *not* takes the place of the entire clause:

A: *Oh, you tasted it before, didn't you?*  
 B: *I don't think so.* (CONV)  
 <meaning: *I don't think that I tasted it before.*>

A: *Is the dog going to jump?*  
 B: *I hope not.* (CONV)  
 <meaning: *I hope that the dog is not going to jump.*>

Relatively few verbs permit substitution for a *that*-clause. Substitution is most common in conversation, and it occurs by far most often with *think* + *so*. Usually the subject is a first-person pronoun, and the speaker expresses a lack of certainty about the previous idea:

A: *Have they found him?*  
 B: *I don't know – I don't think so.* (CONV)  
*I really think your dad is going to be her executor, I'm not sure, but I really think so.* (CONV)

*Hope*, *suppose*, and *guess* are also used with substitution to express stance. *Suppose so* is relatively common in British English conversation, while *guess so* is more common in American English:

A: *You have to write your name down every time.*  
 B: *Yeah, I suppose so.* (BrE CONV)  
 A: *The medicine is slowing down the disease.*  
 B: *Yeah, I guess so.* (AmE CONV)


*Say* + *so* is used for indirect speech, especially in fiction:

*But he always found fault with their effort, and he said so with much threatening.* (FICT)

*Not* is much less common for *that*-clause substitution than *so*. Only *hope* and *guess* occur frequently:

A: *We're not having too early a lunch, are we?*  
 B: *I hope not.* (CONV)  
 A: *You don't think the Cardinals are doing very well at all, are they?*  
 B: *Not that bad, I guess not.* (AmE CONV)

## 10.23 Choice of complement clause type

 This chapter has discussed four types of complement clauses: *that*-clauses, *wh*-clauses, *to*-clauses, and *ing*-clauses. In many ways, the types are interchangeable: each type can complement verbs and adjectives, and each type occurs in several positions. It is natural to ask, then, how do speakers choose between them?

There are many factors that influence this choice. First, there are lexical factors, since many verbs control specific types of complement clause. Nearly any transitive verb can take a *wh*-clause, but the other clause types are more restrictive. For example, *guess* and *conclude* can control only *that*-clauses; *prepare*

and *fail* can control only *to*-clauses; *keep (on)* and *finish* can control only *ing*-clauses. In addition, many other combinations occur. For example, *hope* can control *that*-clauses and *to*-clauses but not *ing*-clauses; *remember* and *believe* can control all four clause types.

There are also semantic factors. For example, some verbs have a more hypothetical meaning with a *to*-clause than an *ing*-clause. For example:

1 ***Remember to wash your hands***, I'll be listening. (CONV)

2 I ***remember going late at night***. (CONV)

In 1, *remember* + *to*-clause is used to refer to a unfulfilled (but expected) future action. In 2, *remember* + *ing*-clause is used for an event that has already occurred.

In fact, there are many subtleties concerning the meaning and structural differences among the complement clause types. Here we present only a few major points:

### A Register factors

- Overall, *that*-clauses and *to*-clauses are more than twice as common as *wh*-clauses and *ing*-clauses.
- Finite complement clauses—i.e. *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses—are most common in conversation, followed by fiction. They are relatively rare in academic prose.
- Non-finite complement clauses—i.e. *to*-clauses and *ing*-clauses—are most common in fiction, followed by news and academic prose. They are relatively rare in conversation.

### B Structural factors

- The majority of *that*-clauses and *wh*-clauses occur in post-predicate position after verbs. In contrast, a much higher proportion of *to*-clauses and *ing*-clauses follow adjectives. This trend is especially strong in academic prose.
- Extraposed constructions and subject predicative constructions are more common with *to*-clauses than with *that*-clauses. For *to*-clauses, extraposed constructions are more common with adjectives than with verbs. Again, this trend is strongest in academic prose.

### C Semantic factors

- *That*-clauses combine with relatively few verbs from only three semantic groups. However, individual verbs (especially *think* and *say*) are extremely common controlling *that*-clauses. In contrast, *to*-clauses and *ing*-clauses combine with a large number of different verbs expressing many different types of meaning.

The following two text samples illustrate the different uses of *that*- and *to*-clauses in conversation and academic prose. (*That*-clauses are in bold and *to*-clauses are marked in []; some *to*-clauses are embedded within *that*-clauses.)

## Text sample 1: CONVERSATION

A: *I said how's your revision going, cos I knew **she was doing revision**, she went cccckkk I try a maths paper and I can't do that, and I <...> a chemistry paper and I can't do that and I really <growl>. I said I think **you need a break** <laugh> I think **you need [to go and do something else for a little while]** – I said cos if you keep looking over thinking **you can't do it**, have a break and go back to it afterwards. You just get really despondent*

B: *Yeah.*

A: *and fed up and think **you can't do it** and you go blank and then you can't touch anything you – and you know **it's hard**. (CONV)*

## Text sample 2: ACADEMIC PROSE

*The above means are not able [to represent an office procedure or an activity in a way which would allow automation of the co-ordination required for execution]. There are no methods for representing the interworking of the different description techniques and it should be noted **that it may be necessary [to model the same activity more than once redundantly and in parallel by different means]**. In particular, it must be possible [to model the interworking of roles (to be represented by organigrams or job profiles), flow charts and forms]. (ACAD)*

The conversation sample illustrates the dense use of *that*-clauses in post-predicate position. Most of the *that*-clauses are controlled by the verb *think*. The subject of *think* is typically *I* or *you*, so that the construction directly represents the thoughts of the speaker or hearer.

In contrast, the academic prose sample illustrates the different complement clauses typical of informational written prose. There are more *to*-clauses than *that*-clauses. The clauses are often controlled by adjectival predicates (e.g. *able*, *necessary*) with non-animate subjects (e.g. *the above means*). The controlling verbs and adjectives express many meanings (ability, communication, necessity, possibility). Finally, extraposed clauses are relatively common (*it should be noted ... and it must be possible ...*).

## Review

Major points in GRAMMAR BITE F: *Ing*-clauses, ellipsis/substitution, and review

- The most common type of *ing*-clause is a post-predicate clause following a verb.
  - There are two major grammatical patterns, with and without a NP between the verb and the *ing*-clause.
  - The most common verbs controlling *ing*-clauses are verbs of manner or aspect (e.g. *begin*, *start*, *stop*).
  - Many adjectives that control *ing*-clauses express a feeling or evaluation (e.g. *sorry*, *afraid*, *capable*).
  - Many of these adjectives are followed by prepositions (e.g. *sorry about*, *afraid of*).
- Ellipsis and substitution in complement clauses is most common in conversation.
  - For *to*-clauses and *wh*-clauses, the complement clause can be omitted if it is understandable from context. The complementizer *to* or *wh*-word is usually retained.

- With certain verbs, *so* or *not* can substitute for a *that*-clause. This substitution is most common in the expression *think so*, but occurs with several other verbs also.
- The types of complement clauses in this chapter are distributed differently across the registers.
- The patterns of use reflect register, structural factors, and semantic factors. Overall, they reflect the typical functions of the different clause types.