Advanced Unit 5a(1)

Emphatic structures (1): cleft sentences



A: Hello. What would you like today?

B: Actually, what happened was that I was walking past your window when I saw your advert for part-time staff.

A: Right. It's the manager you need to see about that, but she isn't here at the moment. Basically, what you have to do is fill in this application form and she'll call you.

B: Thanks. So, what's the job like?

A: Well, the hours are long but the thing I like is the free lunch …

Presentation

A cleft sentence is a sentence which is divided (*cleft* means *divided*) into two parts. The introductory part of the sentence often uses the words *what, it* or *the thing* + the verb *be*:

I like the free lunch. → ***What** I like is the free lunch.*

*The free lunch is **what** I like.*

***It**'s the free lunch I like.*

***The thing** I like is the free lunch.*

Cleft sentences with *what*

- Use *what … be / … be what* to emphasize the noun:

  *What I like **is / are*** the free lunches.*

  *The free lunches **is / are*** **what** I like.*

* Notice that both *is* and *are* are possible when the noun is plural.

- Use *what … do / did + be* to emphasize the verb:

  *Fill in this application form. → **What you do is** fill in this application form.*

  *He applied for a new job. → **What he did was*** apply for a new job.*

* Notice that when the verb in the *what* clause is in the past, the verb *to be* is also in the past.

- Use *what happened + be* to emphasize the rest of the sentence:

  *I was walking past when I saw your advert in the window. → **What happened was (that)** I was walking past your window when I saw your advert for part-time staff.*

Cleft sentences with *it*

Use *it + is/was* + emphasized language + relative clause:

*You need to see the manager. → **It's** the manager (**who**) you need to see.*

*You sign your name on this line. → **It's** on this line (**that**) you sign your name.* (= not the one above/below it)

You don't normally include the pronoun (*who, that*) in these cleft sentences.

Cleft sentences with the *thing*

Cleft sentences with *the thing … is/was* can emphasize:

- the noun: *I like the holidays. → **The thing** I like **is** the holidays.*
- the verb: *Talk to the manager. → **The best thing to do is** talk to the manager.*

Cleft sentences with *place, person, reason* or *way*

You can make other cleft sentences that introduce and emphasize information about a place, person, reason or how something was done. The construction is the same as for cleft sentences with *the thing.*

***The place** (where) he works **is** a fast food restaurant.*

***The person** (who) you need to see **is** the manager.*

***The reason** (why) I'm here **is** because I saw the advert in your window.*

***The way** to do this **is** by filling in this form.*

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Exercises

1 Match 1–5 with A–E.

1	What I like	A	I like.
2	What he did was	B	is the long holidays.
3	It's the long holidays	C	I like is the long holidays.
4	What you need is	D	a long holiday.
5	The thing	E	take a long holiday.

2 Rewrite the first sentence as a cleft sentence.

1 I love the French fries in this restaurant.
What I love about this restaurant is the French fries .

2 Sign your name here and here.
What you ..... and here.

3 My brother has to wear a uniform and check everyone's identity.
What my brother has ..... and check everyone's identity.

4 There was a sudden crash and all the lights went out.
What happened ..... and all the lights went out.

5 They need to tell their teacher not me.
It ....., not me.

6 I want to hear the facts, not everyone's opinion!
It ....., not everyone's opinion.

7 I like the special effects in this movie.
The thing I like ..... the special effects.

8 You need to see the manager about your complaint.
The person you need to see about your complaint ..... .

9 I'm waiting because I'd like to get tickets for the concert.
The reason I'm waiting ..... tickets for the concerts.

3 Read the conversations. Speaker B corrects speaker A using cleft sentences. Write B's sentences using the words in brackets. Then listen and check.

1 A: Doesn't Martin build model cars?
B: No. What Martin builds are aeroplanes. (what / builds / aeroplanes)

2 A: Do I put this in the oven now?
B: No. ..... (what / do / in the fridge)

3 A: Did they take the wrong train?
B: No. ..... (what happened / the wrong bus)

4 A: We need to call an electrician.
B: No. ..... (it / plumber / call)

5 A: We can't afford to go to the museums in London. It'll be so expensive.
B: No, it won't. .....
(the good thing about museums in London / they / free)

6 A: The car's broken down. Call the police!
B: No. ..... (the person / need to call / a mechanic)

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