

## Lesson Plan: It-cleft vs. wh-cleft sentences

<b>Level</b>	Advanced (C1–C2)
<b>Time</b>	60–90 minutes
<b>Skills</b>	Grammar, writing
<b>Focus</b>	Choosing between it-cleft and wh-cleft (pseudo-cleft) for focus and flow

### OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Produce both it-cleft and wh-cleft sentences accurately
- Choose between it-cleft and wh-cleft depending on what element needs focus
- Use cleft sentences to correct information and create coherent, well-organised discourse
- Edit text by replacing flat structures with appropriate cleft sentences

### TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

#### *It-cleft — focus on a noun phrase*

- It was the government's indecision that caused the crisis.
- It was not the cost but the timing that surprised us.
- It was in 1953 that Watson and Crick published their model of DNA.

#### *Wh-cleft — focus on an action or quality*

- What surprised us most was the speed of the recovery.
- What the team needs is strong leadership.
- What I find most impressive is her ability to remain calm.

#### *All-cleft for exclusivity*

- All I'm asking for is a little honesty.
- All they wanted was a straightforward answer.

#### *Choosing between them*

- It-cleft: when you need to highlight WHO, WHAT (thing), WHEN, WHERE
- Wh-cleft: when you need to highlight an action, quality, or situation

### LESSON PROCEDURE

#### 1. Warm-up (10 min)

**Task:** Minimal pairs: same information, different cleft.

- 'It was courage that drove her.' vs. 'What drove her was courage.' — same meaning? Same effect?
- Students discuss which feels more natural in different contexts.

#### 2. Presentation (15 min)

**Task:** When to use each: topic/focus analysis.

- It-cleft: corrects or highlights a specific noun phrase.

- Wh-cleft: builds to a key point — the new information comes at the end.
- All-cleft: emphasises exclusivity or minimalism.

### 3. Guided practice (10 min)

**Task:** Rewrite using the most appropriate cleft type.

- 'The lack of communication created problems.' — make 'lack of communication' the focus.
- 'She cares about honesty above everything.' — make 'honesty' the end focus.

### 4. Writing task (25 min)

**Task:** Write a short analytical paragraph using both types of cleft.

- Topic: 'The key factors behind the success/failure of a project, policy, or idea.'
- Peer feedback: is the cleft type appropriate to what's being focused on?

### 5. Editing task (5–10 min)

**Task:** Add 3 cleft sentences to a flat paragraph to improve its impact.

## EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Write 5 it-cleft and 5 wh-cleft sentences using a topic from your area of work or study.
2. Rewrite a paragraph, replacing 3 flat statements with cleft sentences.
3. Find 5 examples of cleft sentences in journalism. Identify the type and the focus element.