

Dutch Sentence Structure series - Part 3 of 4

Dutch Sentence Structure

Part 3: Subclauses & Indirect Speech

What you will learn in this course:

- ✓ What a subclause is, and why it can't stand on its own
- ✓ Five useful conjunctions: omdat, als, toen, tenzij, zodat
- ✓ The golden rule: in a subclause, every verb moves to the end
- ✓ How to start a sentence with a subclause
- ✓ How to retell statements and questions using indirect speech
- ✓ Practice exercises with answer key

LEVEL	FORMAT	PAGES
A1-A2	PDF Workbook	17 pages

Introduction

In Parts 1 and 2, you learned how Dutch builds main sentences and how to ask questions. Now it's time to combine sentences and add more detail using subclauses.

A subclause is a sentence part that cannot stand on its own. It adds extra information to a main clause: a reason, a condition, a moment in time, or a goal.

This course covers two related topics:

1. **Subclauses** → using conjunctions like *omdat*, *als*, *toen*, *tenzij*, and *zodat*
2. **Indirect speech** → retelling what someone said or asked, without quoting them word for word

How to use this workbook

Read each explanation carefully and study the examples before attempting the exercises. The answer key is at the end of this workbook.

PREVIEW – Dutch and You

Part 1 - Subclauses

1.1. What is a Subclause?

A subclause cannot exist on its own. It needs a main clause to lean on. Together, the main clause and the subclause form one complete sentence.

You connect them with a conjunction. Here are the 5 most useful ones to start with:

OMDAT	ALS	TOEN	TENZIJ	ZODAT
<i>cause/reason</i>	<i>general time</i>	<i>time in the past</i>	<i>condition</i>	<i>goal/ consequence</i>

There are many more conjunctions, but you'll get far with these five.

1.2 The Golden Rule: Verbs Move to the End

The rule:

In a subclause, **ALL** verbs move to the end, in the same order you already know. The first verb goes first, the second verb goes last.

WRONG ORDER	SUBCLAUSE (omdat)
... omdat ik wil vandaag niet koken .	... omdat ik vandaag niet wil koken .

This is one of the most common mistakes NT2 students make, and it makes a real difference in how natural your Dutch sounds.

Part 2 - Indirect Speech

2.1. What is Indirect Speech?

We use indirect speech when we summarize or retell our own or someone else's words, thoughts, or questions afterward, without quoting them word for word.

dat	retelling a factual statement, opinion, or thought
of	retelling a yes/no question
wat / waar / ...	retelling an open question (use the same question word)

The structure:

Main clause + dat / of / question word + subclause (verb at the end).

2.2 Watch the Subject and Verb!

When you retell what someone said, the subject often changes, and the verb must change with it.

DIRECT	INDIRECT
Hij zegt: 'Ik ben te laat.'	Hij zegt dat hij te laat is .
Emma zegt: 'Ik kom morgen niet naar de vergadering.'	Emma zegt dat ze morgen niet naar de vergadering komt .

Always double-check:

Did the subject change from ik to hij/zij? Then the verb conjugation changes too. This is one of the easiest things to forget. Always check it.