

1 Type as a grammatical system of the clause

■ The five major categories

Clause type is the grammatical system whose five major terms are illustrated in:

[1]	i	<i>You are generous.</i>	[declarative]
	ii	<i>Are you generous?</i>	[closed interrogative]
	iii	<i>How generous are you?</i>	[open interrogative]
	iv	<i>How generous you are!</i>	[exclamative]
	v	<i>Be generous.</i>	[imperative]

■ Characteristic use and general definitions

Each of the categories is associated with a characteristic use as follows:

[2]	CLAUSE TYPE	CHARACTERISTIC USE
	i declarative	statement
	ii closed interrogative	closed question
	iii open interrogative	open question
	iv exclamative	exclamatory statement
	v imperative	directive

A closed question is one with a closed set of answers: for example, the answers to [1iii] are just “Yes” and “No”. By contrast, [1iii] has any number of possible answers, and is therefore an open question; similarly with *Who attended the meeting?*, and so on. In [2iv] we have used ‘exclamatory statement’ rather than the more familiar ‘exclamation’, because an exclamatory meaning can be added to any of the use categories, but the special syntactic construction shown in [1iv] is associated just with a particular kind of statement. For example, the exclamatory command *Get the hell out of here* or the exclamatory question *What on earth are you doing?* belong syntactically with [1v] and [1iii] respectively, not with [1iv]. ‘Directive’ in [2v] is a cover term for requests, commands, instructions, and the like; traditional grammars tend to use the term ‘command’, but this is far too narrow and specific for our purposes if understood in its everyday sense.

The correlation shown in [2] provides the basis for general definitions of the clause type categories:

[3]	Imperative clause is a grammatically distinct class of clause whose members are characteristically used to issue directives.
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And similarly for the others.