110 Expressing surprise, shock, pleasure, etc.

1 *That's/How* + adjective

We can use *That's* + an adjective when we think something is very good, very bad or very surprising:
'Jeremy has just asked me to marry him!'
'That's wonderful!'
'My mobile phone was stolen yesterday.'
'Oh, ***that's awful!****'*

	GOOD
That's	*wonderful! great! fantastic!*

	BAD
That's	*awful! terrible! horrible!*

	SURPRISING
That's	*crazy! amazing! incredible!*

We can also use *How* + an adjective:
'Last night we heard a knock at the door, but there was no one there.'
***'How strange!** Was it the wind?'*
'She's angry and she's not speaking to me.' ***'How silly!'***

2 *What a/an* + (adjective) + noun

We use *What a/an* + (adjective) + noun when we are disappointed, annoyed, surprised or very pleased:
'We can't come to your party next week, I'm afraid.' *'Oh,* ***what a pity!*** *I'm sure you'd enjoy it.'*
'Karen phoned to say she's coming home for the summer.' ***'What a lovely surprise!'***

	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
What	*a (lovely) surprise! a (fantastic) idea! a (wonderful) day!*	*a pity! an (awful) shame! a pain! (= That's annoying!)*

We need a noun in exclamations with *what*. We don't use *what* + adjective; we use *That's* or *How*:
✗ ~~*What fantastic!*~~ ✓ *That's fantastic!*

3 *Really?, No!, Wow!*

There are also some single words which we use when something is surprising:

'I've just got a pay rise of €2,000 a year.'
***'Wow!** That's fantastic!'*
***'No!** What a surprise!'*
***'Really?** Lucky you.'*

We use *Wow!* only for something good. *No!* and *Really?* can be used for good or bad news:

'I failed my final university exams.'
✗ ~~*'Wow! I'm really sorry.'*~~
✓ ***'No!** I'm really sorry.'*
✓ ***'Really?** I can't believe that …'*

Pronunciation ➤ 1.39