It can also be an 'empty' object, anticipating a later clause. This allows us to combine several pieces of information into one sentence, again putting new information at the end:
*We leave **it** to the reader **to appreciate what this will mean**.*
(= The reader can appreciate what this will mean. We leave the reader to do this.)
*She thought **it** a pity/sad **that he hadn't joined in the festivities**.*
(= He hadn't joined in the festivities. She thought that was a pity.)

⚠ We don't use *it* as an 'empty' object when the main verb is followed immediately by a *that* clause:
✗ ~~She thought it that he hadn't joined in.~~ ✓ *She thought that he hadn't joined in.*

3 Focus

In English we can show which part of a sentence or clause contains the most important point or 'focus' by placing the important point at the beginning or end of the sentence – these are the two positions which appear most important to a reader or listener:
***Sandra** invited Lucy to **her dinner party**.*

If we want to put the focus on an item that doesn't naturally come at the beginning or end of the sentence (e.g. *Lucy* in the example above) we have to manipulate the grammar to bring the item to the front focus position. For example, we can use cleft sentences (➤ Unit 75):
***It was Lucy** that Sandra invited to her dinner party.*
***Lucy** was the girl that Sandra invited to her dinner party.*

Similarly, we can give focus to something by moving it into the end focus position:
*The girl that Sandra invited to her dinner party was **Lucy**.*

4 Contrast and emphasis

Because word order in English is usually fixed, we can emphasise or contrast something by moving it to an unfamiliar position. We often do this with adverbial expressions and infinitive clauses (➤ Unit 76.4) and objects and complements (➤ Unit 76.5):
*The facade of the house was blank and austere. But it was ornate and luxurious **inside**.*
→ ***But inside** it was ornate and luxurious.*
*I may be **old**, but I'm not stupid.*
→ ***Old** I may be, but I'm not **stupid**! **Old** I may be, but **stupid** I'm not!*
*Priscilla invariably rejected impoverished suitors. Her only ambition was **to marry for money**.*
→ ***To marry for money** was her only ambition.*

5 Manipulating grammar and vocabulary

In order to follow the ordering principles above when writing, we have to choose suitable vocabulary and grammar. As the subject usually comes at the beginning of a sentence in English, the simplest way to organise a sentence is to choose a subject which links with the previous information:
*Whenever possible, we pack all our furniture in **flat packages**. [**Transport** becomes cheaper because less space is taken up by a **flat pack** than a bulky one.]*
→ ***A flat pack** takes up less space than a bulky one, which means that transport becomes cheaper.*
Alternatively, we may change the grammar or vocabulary:

using a different verb or a passive verb (➤ Unit 62)	*Our neighbours got a good price for their car. They **sold it** to a local garage. / **It was bought** by a local garage.*
using introductory *it* (➤ Unit 43.1/5)	*Fleming's behaviour was inexplicable. **It was hard to believe** that he had become this savage with a bare knife.*
using participle or infinitive clauses (➤ Units 55 and 56)	*Steve went home. **Walking towards his door**, he noticed a piece of paper left on the doorstep.* *Anatole walked away from the discussion. **To argue with such a person** was fruitless.*