Name: _____

Relative Clauses: Restrictive and Non-Restrictive

One type of relative clause is called a restrictive, or defining, clause. This type of clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence. If it is omitted from the sentence, the sentence does not make sense or the meaning changes significantly. The restrictive relative clause offers important information about the noun it is describing.

Example 1: Students who follow the rules will not get into trouble.

The relative clause is *who follow the rules*. If that clause is removed, the sentence no longer means the same thing, as seen in Example 2.

Example 2: Students will not get into trouble.

The meaning is no longer the same as the original sentence. It no longer explains which students will not get into trouble. The clause *who follow the rules* is a restrictive clause.

The other type of relative clause is the non-restrictive clause. This type of clause provides additional information about the noun, but this information is not essential to the sentence.

Example 3: Janna, who likes dogs, lives in Denver.

The relative clause is *who likes dogs*. If that clause is removed, the sentence will still have the same meaning.

Example 4: Janna lives in Denver.

The information in the relative clause is interesting, but if it is omitted the meaning remains the same. The relative clause *who likes dogs* is a non-restrictive clause. Notice that the non-restrictive clause is set apart from the rest of the sentence by a comma before and after it.

Below are sentences containing relative clauses. Underline the relative clause in each sentence and write *restrictive* in the blank if it is a restrictive clause and *non-restrictive* if it is a non-restrictive clause.

1. My father, who drives a red car, was late to pick me up. _____

2. The green vase that is on the top shelf is very expensive. _____

3. Keenan asked Victor, who was in his class, if he could have a ride. _____

4. The thief hid the money that he had stolen from the store. _____

5. Amanda spoke to the clerk who was helping her. _____

6. The letter, which was written in blue ink, told Eugene the location of the key. _____

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