

Relative clauses

Relative clauses give us extra information about something/someone or identify which particular thing/person we are talking about. They are often introduced by the following words.

Use	Example
<i>which</i> (for things and animals)	Did you see the film which was on TV last night?
<i>who</i> (for people, and animals when we want to give them a personality)	Tom Davies, who is appearing in concert in Reading this week, is with me in the studio.
<i>when</i> (for times)	Do you remember the day when we met?
<i>where</i> (for places)	This is the place where they filmed <i>Citizen Kane</i> .
<i>why</i> (for reasons)	That's the reason why he's so popular.
<i>whom</i> (for people as the object of the relative clause)	Is that the man whom we saw at the cinema yesterday?
<i>whose</i> (for possession)	My next guest on the show is John Travolta, whose career goes back to the early seventies.

Watch out!

- When the relative pronoun (*who*, *which*, etc) is the subject of the relative clause, you do **not** need another subject.
 - ✓ I admire Jude Law, **who** always works hard on his films.
 - ✗ I admire Jude Law, **who he** always works hard on his films.
- Whom* is quite formal. It is natural in informal English to use *who* instead of *whom*, even when it is the object of the relative clause. After a preposition, however, we always use *whom*. Informally, we usually put the preposition at the end of the clause and use *who*.
 - ✓ Is that the man **who** we saw at the cinema yesterday?
 - ✓ Charlie Chaplin was a comic genius **to whom** all comedians owe a great deal.
 - ✓ Charlie Chaplin was a comic genius **who** all comedians owe a great deal **to**.
- Where* can be replaced by a preposition + *which*. Less formally, we can put the preposition at the end of the clause.
 - ✓ The theatre **where / in which** I first acted is somewhere around here.
 - ✓ The theatre **which** I first acted **in** is somewhere around here.
- We can do the same thing with *when*.
 - ✓ Do you know the year **when / in which** the first western was made?
 - ✓ Do you know the year **which** the first western was made **in**?

Non-defining relative clauses

Non-defining relative clauses simply give us more information about something/someone. The sentence makes complete sense without the relative clause.

Use	Example
To give extra information about something/someone	Ray Watson, who starred in Bandits , is considering making a film based on the life of Einstein.

Watch out!

- Non-defining relative clauses are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.
 - ✓ Megamonsters, **which** was filmed in New York, is a very disappointing film.
- We cannot leave out the word which introduces the relative clause and we cannot use the word *that* instead.
 - ✗ Megamonsters, **was** filmed in New York, is a very disappointing film.
 - ✗ Megamonsters, **that** was filmed in New York, is a very disappointing film.
- Which* can refer back to the whole of the sentence.
 - ✓ We finally got tickets for the concert, **which** was very lucky.
(It doesn't mean the concert was lucky. It means getting tickets for the concert was lucky.)

Defining relative clauses

Defining relative clauses tell us which one of a group of things/people we are talking about. The sentence doesn't usually make complete sense without the relative clause.

Use	Example
To tell us which one of a group of things/people we are talking about	The book which I've read was the best of all. The one who is wearing a blue shirt is Justin Timberlake, isn't it?

Watch out!

- Defining relative clauses are not separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.
✓ This is the DVD **which** I told you about the other day.
- We can also use **that** to introduce the relative clause.
✓ This is the DVD **that** I told you about the other day.
- We can often leave out the word which introduces the relative clause when it is the object of the clause.
✓ This is the DVD I told you about the other day.
- Notice that we do not need a preposition when we use **where** or **when**.
✓ The theatre **where** I first acted is somewhere around here.
X ~~The theatre **where** I first acted **in** is somewhere around here.~~
✓ Do you know the year **when** the first western was made?
X ~~Do you know the year **when** the first western was made **in**?~~

PRACTICE:

Choose the correct word.

- The minister, **which** / **who** was appointed just last week, made no comment on the situation.
- Isn't that the spot **which** / **where** the accident happened last night?
- The human brain, **which** / **who** weighs about 1400 grammes, is ten times the size of a baboon's.
- There are several reasons **which** / **why** I don't want to see Michael tonight.
- This is the office **which** / **where** I work.
- The new girl in our class, **who's** / **whose** name is Alexandra, seems really nice.
- The *Titanic*, **which** / **that** people said was unsinkable, sank on her maiden voyage.
- All the people to **who** / **whom** the e-mail was sent replied.
- April 1st, **which** / **when** we play tricks on people, is known as April Fools' Day.
- Harry Hill, **who** / **whose** new series starts next week, is one of my favourite comedians.
- A very popular breed of dog is the German Shepherd, **which** / **who** is often used as a guard dog.
- Blackpool Tower, **which** / **that** was modelled on the Eiffel Tower, is a very well-known landmark.

If a word in BOLD is correct, put C. If it is incorrect, type the correct pronoun.

- 1 November 5th was the day **which** Guy Fawkes tried to blow up Parliament.
- 2 There were none of my favourite biscuits left when I had a cup of tea, **that** was really annoying.
- 3 I've just got a new webcam **that** takes really clear pictures.
- 4 *The Godfather* was made by Francis Ford Copolla, **who's** daughter is also a film director.
- 5 Can you think of any reason **which** Cathy should be angry with me?
- 6 Here's a photo of the hotel **where** we stayed in when we were in Beijing.
- 7 How do you think the first man **whom** walked on the moon felt?
- 8 This is the first occasion on **which** the leaders of these two countries have met.
- 9 He is a person for **who** very few people feel much sympathy.
- 10 The moment **which** the hero suddenly appears from behind a tree is the best moment in the whole film.
- 11 I met a man **which** had a dog with only three legs.
- 12 My new school, **who** I moved to about a month ago, seems like quite a friendly place.

Rewrite as one sentence using a relative clause.

- 1 My friend, Simon, plays the guitar. He has just released a CD.
My friend, Simon, who has just released a CD, plays the guitar.
- 2 Prince Charles is heir to the throne of England. His wife was Princess Diana.
.....
- 3 Microsoft has a lot of power in the world of computers. That annoys some people.
.....
- 4 The euro replaced a number of national currencies. It was introduced in January 2002.
.....
- 5 *Friends* ran for ten years. It is one of my favourite series.
.....
- 6 Venus is a very hot place. It is much closer to the Sun than the Earth is.
.....
- 7 Cricket is popular in many countries around the world. It is played between two teams of eleven.
.....
- 8 Parts of Buckingham Palace are open to the public. It is where the queen lives.
.....
- 9 The greyhound is the fastest dog. It can reach speeds of over 65 kilometres an hour.
.....
- 10 *1984* was written by George Orwell. His real name was Eric Blair.
.....

Write one word in each gap. Do not write *that* and do not leave any gaps blank.

Find me a show that works

by our TV reviewer, Jeremy Platt

I'm sure there was a reason (1) I became a TV reviewer. Maybe it was my love of classic shows (2) kept me entertained as a child. Or maybe it was the presenters (3) seemed to promise an exciting world of glamour and showbiz. To be honest, I've watched so many shows lately (4) have bored me to tears that I've forgotten. Take *Kid Swap*, for example, the new show (5) Channel 7 hopes will revive their viewing figures. The show takes kids (6) parents have had enough and swaps them with kids from other families for two weeks. The problem with this show is that I'm just not sure at (7) it's aimed – parents or teenagers. Parents (8) watch this show will find it childish, particularly at the moment (9) one of the teenagers does nothing but complain. Teenage viewers (10) watch more than the first five minutes will soon get bored of the parents, (11) blame anybody but themselves for the situation. This is definitely one idea (12) should be put exactly where it belongs – in the bin!

Put 0 (i.e. zero) in the gaps (from the previous exercise) which could be completed using *THAT*. Put X where *THAT* could not be used.

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