

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are supporting, or subordinate clauses in multi-clause sentences. They are introduced using relative pronouns.

Relative pronouns are “**that, who, whom, whose, which, where, when, and why**”. They are used to join clauses to make a complex sentence.

The table below sums up the use of relative pronouns:

Function in the sentence	Reference to				
	People	Things / concepts	Place	Time	Reason
Subject	who, that	which, that			
Object	(that, who, whom)	(which, that)	where	when	why
Possessive	whose	whose, of which			

Relative clauses can be either ‘defining’ or ‘non-defining’.

Defining relative clauses give essential information to understand the sentence. There is no comma before the subordinate clause.

- This is the house that my uncle moved to last year.
- I don't know the day when Jane plans to marry him.

Non-defining relative clauses give EXTRA information. If we remove the relative clause, the sentence still makes sense. The subordinate clause in the non-defining relative clause is written between two commas

- Mr. Mike , who is our new Science teacher, does an online part-time job after school.
- The local sport club , where people practice different sport activities, is closed every Friday.

Relative pronoun is used as a **subject**:

- This is the house that had extra rooms added on last year.
- People who eat pop-corn during the movie used to annoy me.

Relative pronoun used as an **object**:

When referring to a person or thing, the relative pronoun can sometimes be left out in the object position.

- This is the man (who / that) I wanted to speak to and whose name I'd forgotten.
- The library didn't have the book (which / that) I wanted.
- I didn't like the book (which / that) John gave me.
- This is the house (that) I lived in when I first came to the US.

"Whom" is most commonly used following a preposition.

- I have found you the tutor for whom you were looking.
- I don't know to whom you were speaking.

"Whose" is the only possessive relative pronoun in English. It can be used with both people and things:

- The family whose house burnt in the fire was immediately given a suite in a hotel.
- The book whose author is a famous actress has become a bestseller.

"that" is used with defining relative clauses and refer to people or things and is used to refer to someone or something in general.

- He is the kind of person that/who will never let you down.
- I am looking for someone that/who could give me a ride to Chicago.

However, when a particular person is being spoken about, who is preferred:

- The old lady who lives next door is a teacher.
- The girl who wore a red dress attracted everybody's attention at the party.

Practice:

Choose the correct answer from a, b, c , or d:

1. Neil Armstrong was the man _____ was the first human on the moon.

a. who

b. whose

c. which

2. The man _____ father was sent to prison lives in my hometown.

a. who

b. whose

c. whom

3. The story, _____ was written by Najeeb, will probably win an award.

- a. whose
- b. which
- c. that

4. The pilot _____ is flying the plane is very clever

- a. who
- b. when
- c. which

5. This is the house in _____ I live.

- a. where
- b. which
- c. that

6. Fatima, _____ mother makes lovely cakes, has invited us to tea

- a. who
- b. whom
- c. whose

7. The computer _____ I bought last week is already broken.

- a. who
- b. which
- c. where

8. This is the house _____ my grandfather was born.

- a. which
- b. who
- c. where

9. The man _____ bought our house has just won 2 million Dhs.

- a. who
- b. whom
- c. whose

10. The cake _____ I've just baked is too hot to eat.

- a. when
- b. where
- c. that

11. The books _____ are on the desk are mine.

- a. where
- b. whose
- c. that

12. The teacher _____ we all like is ill today

- a. how
- b. whom
- c. whose

13. The house _____ they have rented is in the centre of town.

- a. who
- b. where
- c. which

14. That is the place _____ my cousin works.

- a. whose
- b. where
- c. which

15. He is the man _____ wife died last week.

- a. whose
- b. where
- c. whom

16. I really enjoyed the time _____ we went to that Italian restaurant.

- a. who
- b. when
- c. which

17. The student _____ the teacher punished last week is still angry.

- a. whose
- b. which
- c. whom

18. He bought all the books _____ are required for the course.

- a. that
- b. who
- c. where

19. I remember the day _____ I graduated like it was just yesterday.

- a. which
- b. who
- c. when

20. The man _____ car broke down went to the station

- a. who
- b. that
- c. whose