

Your name: _____

RELATIVE CLAUSES

Relative clauses give information about a noun (or noun phrase). They are linked to the noun (or noun phrase) by a relative pronoun (e.g. *who*, *which*). The relative pronoun can be either the subject or the object of the clause, and we do not use another pronoun in the clause to refer to the noun:

*Why not install lights **which** have a timer? (not Why not install lights **which** they have a timer?)*

▲ We sometimes use a participle clause instead of a relative clause (see Unit 12):

the man sitting beside me (= the man who is sitting beside me)

the food kept in the fridge (= the food which is kept in the fridge)

1 Relative pronouns

We use

♦ **who** to refer to people:

*Please welcome **Mike Bowers**, **who** is going to talk to us about how to look after your home.*

♦ **which** to refer to things:

*These are dangerous if you live in **a flat which** is in a large high-rise building.*

♦ **that** to refer to people or things:

*Find **someone that** can check on your home while you're away.*

*Store away any **objects that** could become damaging missiles.*

That is an alternative to *who* and *which* and is more common in spoken English.

▲ *That* is not used in non-defining relative clauses (see below).

♦ **where** to refer to places:

*This is **your home**, **the place where** you keep your most treasured possessions.*

♦ **when** to refer to times:

*Programme them to come on at **times when** you would normally be home.*

♦ **whose** to show possession:

*You're **a person whose job** involves a lot of travel.*

*He lives in **an old house, whose roof** needs repairing.*

♦ **why** after **the reason or reasons**:

*There are often very good **reasons why** one house is burgled and another is not.*

2 Defining relative clauses

Defining relative clauses give information after a noun to identify the noun more clearly:

*Find **someone who can collect your mail for you**.*

*Store away any **objects that could become damaging missiles** if it gets windy.* (the relative clause identifies the type of objects)

Without these relative clauses, it is unclear which person, place or thing we are referring to:

*Store away any **objects if it gets windy**.* (we do not know which objects)

We can leave out the relative pronoun when it refers back to the object of the defining relative clause. Compare:

Maybe there's a neighbour (that) you can ask. (neighbour is the object of the verb)

In the evening, a house that's very dark can really stand out. (house is the subject of the verb: not a house is very dark can really stand out)

3 Non-defining relative clauses

Non-defining relative clauses add extra, non-essential information about something. Compare:

I applied to the university, which is located in the centre of the city. (there is only one university, so its location is extra information: non-defining)

I applied to the university which is located in the centre of the city. (there is another university which is not in the centre of the city: defining)

Non-defining relative clauses are more common in written language than in spoken language.

With non-defining relative clauses

- we do not use the relative pronoun *that*:

*The burglars got in through the kitchen window, which the owners had forgotten to shut.
(not the kitchen window, that the owners)*

- we separate the relative clause from the main clause with commas. There may be two commas or one comma depending on whether the relative clause comes in the middle of a sentence or at the end:

A letterbox can become full of uncollected letters, which is a great help to a burglar.

Mr Smith, who was my primary school teacher, got married last week.

- we cannot leave out the relative pronoun:

My new house, which I have just redecorated, is much larger than my old house. (not My new house, I have just redecorated)

- the relative pronoun can refer to a single noun phrase or to a whole clause:

My neighbour, who lives upstairs, often looks after my flat. (who refers to my neighbour)

Some people seem to think it's just a matter of locking all the doors, which is fine as long as there are no nasty storms while you are away. (which refers to the whole of the first phrase)

Compare the key differences between defining and non-defining relative clauses:

Defining relative clauses:

- identify the thing that you are talking about
- that* can replace *who* or *which*
- the relative pronoun can be left out if it refers to the object
- no commas

Non-defining relative clauses:

- give additional, non-essential information
- that* cannot be used
- the relative pronoun cannot be left out
- must have commas

4 Prepositions

When prepositions are used with relative clauses they usually come at the end of the clause in spoken English:

You may have a neighbour that you can rely on. (informal)

In formal style the preposition can be placed before the relative pronouns *which* or *whom*:

I was unsuccessful in obtaining a place at any of the universities to which I applied.

My boss, for whom I have worked for over 30 years, has decided to retire.

Grammar extra: Common collocations with relative pronouns

We often use the expression *the one* with defining relative clauses:

He's the one who suggested I became a teacher.

My father is the one that taught me to play the piano.

That house is the one where I grew up.

Where can be used after expressions such as *the situation*, *the stage* or *the point*:

We were in a situation where there were no easy solutions.

I'm almost at the stage where I'm ready to quit my job and go into business for myself.

I've reached the point where I feel I should just give up.

Grammar exercises

1 Match the beginnings (1–10) and endings (a–j) of these sentences, and join them by adding a relative pronoun. In which two sentences can the relative pronoun be left out?

- 1 The college has many students *who* *d*
- 2 My cousin Phillip is a solicitor; he was the one
- 3 I went to a school
- 4 I visited the theatre
- 5 Why don't you call again at a time
- 6 Mrs Jackson is the kind of teacher
- 7 Faraday was the man
- 8 Is there any reason
- 9 What was the name of that company
- 10 That's the woman

- a Mozart performed many of his operas.
- b flat I rent.
- c every student wants to have.
- d** are classed as 'mature' because they are over 21.
- e advised me to study law.
- f I'm not as busy.
- g invented the first electric motor.
- h factory burned down yesterday?
- i didn't have very good sports facilities.
- j manufacturers like to keep demand above supply?

2 Rewrite the sentences below as single sentences using non-defining relative clauses.

- 1 My father lives in a small house full of ornaments. This makes it really difficult to clean.
My father lives in a small house full of ornaments, which makes it really difficult to clean.
- 2 Some students take a year out before university. This allows them to work or travel.
Some students
- 3 The Guggenheim Museum is in Bilbao. It only displays contemporary art.
The Guggenheim Museum,
- 4 My English teacher is leaving. His lectures are very interesting.
My English teacher,
- 5 The lecture was about current economic policy. It was not very easy to understand.
The lecture
- 6 In 1951 my parents arrived in New York. They stayed there for the rest of their lives.
My parents arrived in New York
- 7 I gave my assignment to the faculty secretary. She was not very friendly.
I gave my assignment

3 There is a mistake with relative clauses in each of the email extracts below. Find the mistakes and correct them.

1

I wonder if you can help me. I want to get in touch with the woman which we met at the meeting last week. Do you know the one I mean?

.....which who.....

2

I'm sending this email to ask for more information about the language courses which I saw them advertised in *The Daily Star* yesterday.

.....

3

How are you getting on with your new job? I'm finding my new job exhausting, that is not surprising considering I have to travel so much.

.....

4

I really enjoyed the lecture which you gave it on Wednesday, and am thinking about doing my assignment on the same topic.

.....

5

You left your notebook at my house. Do you need it? It's the one which in you have written your lecture notes.

.....

6

I'm just emailing you to find out if you want to go to the cinema on Thursday. I've got today's newspaper which has a list of films. If you're free, let me know.

.....

7

Can you pick up some shopping on your way home? I want some of those bread rolls what we had last week. Will you be able to stop at the shop?

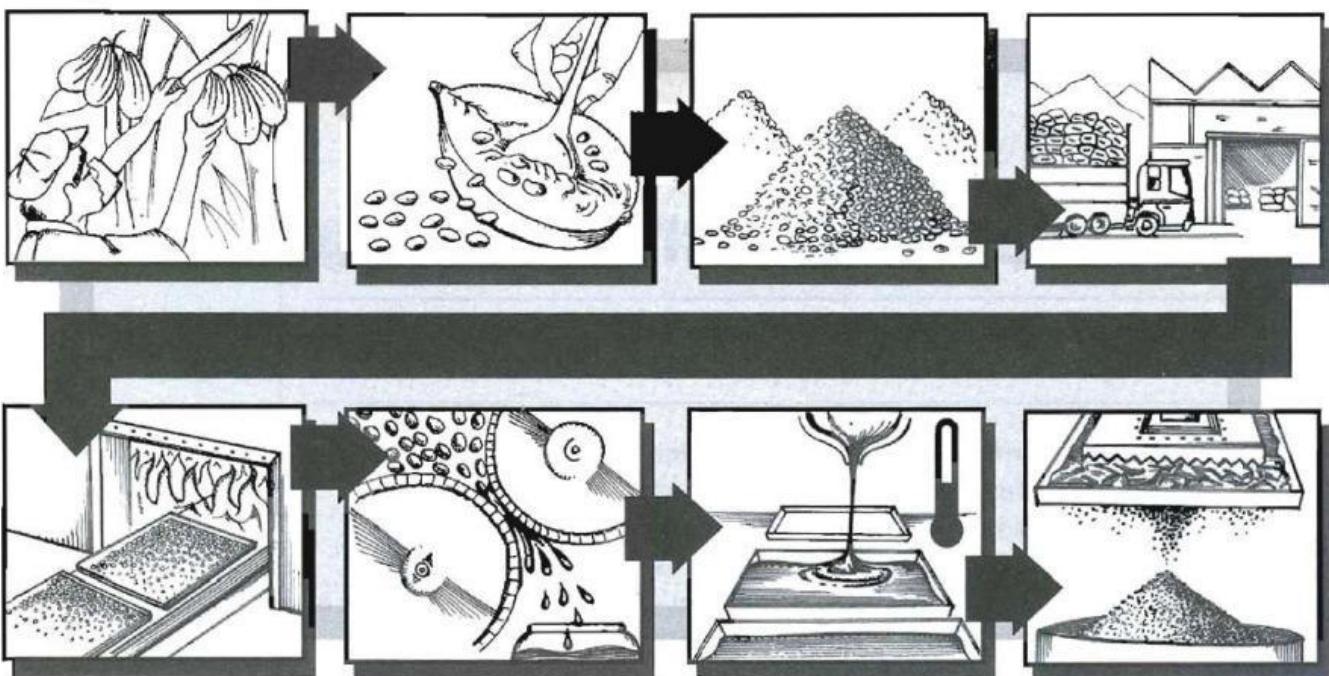
.....

8

You are clearly a person who life is full and busy and that is why we think you would like our *Ladies Personal Organiser*. For just £15.99 you ...

.....

4 Read the description of how chocolate is made. Add the relative clauses (a-i) to the text in the gaps and write in the appropriate relative pronoun *where*, *which* or *that*.



Chocolate's varied flavours, colours, shapes and textures result from different recipe traditions 1 The essential ingredient in all chocolate is cocoa, which is made from the cream-coloured beans 2 The cacao tree, 3 , produces a fruit about the size of a small pineapple, 4

After harvesting, the cocoa beans are removed from the pods and piled in heaps 5 The dried beans are then transported to factories 6 The shells are then removed and the beans are ground into chocolate liquor – a thick brown liquid 7 This liquor contains a high percentage of fat (cocoa butter), 8 The solid block of cocoa that remains is then made into a powder 9 , or is mixed back with some of the cocoa butter, sugar and other flavour such as vanilla to make the different kinds of chocolate.

- a is removed by using presses
- b they are sorted and roasted
- c are left for several days to dry
- d can be used to make a hot chocolate drink
- e grows in equatorial regions such as South America, Africa and Indonesia
- f forms a solid at about room temperature
- g which have evolved in different parts of the world
- h inside are the tree's seeds
- i grow in pods on the cacao tree