

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 <u>who</u> <u>d</u>      | a Mozart performed many of his operas.                     |
| 2 My cousin Phillip is a solicitor; he was the one ..... | b flat I rent.   |
| 3 I went to a school .....                               | c every student wants to have.                             |
| 4 I visited the theatre .....                            | <b>d</b> are classed as 'mature' because they are over 21. |
| 5 Why don't you call again at a time .....               | e advised me to study law.                                 |
| 6 Mrs Jackson is the kind of teacher .....               | f I'm not as busy.   |
| 7 Faraday was the man .....                              | g invented the first electric motor.                       |
| 8 Is there any reason .....                              | h factory burned down yesterday?                           |
| 9 What was the name of that company .....                | i didn't have very good sports facilities.                 |
| 10 That's the woman .....                                | j manufacturers like to keep demand above supply?          |

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

- 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.
- Some students take a year out before university. This allows them to work or travel.  
Some students .....
- The Guggenheim Museum is in Bilbao. It only displays contemporary art.  
The Guggenheim Museum, .....
- My English teacher is leaving. His lectures are very interesting.  
My English teacher, .....
- The lecture was about current economic policy. It was not very easy to understand.  
The lecture .....
- In 1951 my parents arrived in New York. They stayed there for the rest of their lives.  
My parents arrived in New York .....
- 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?

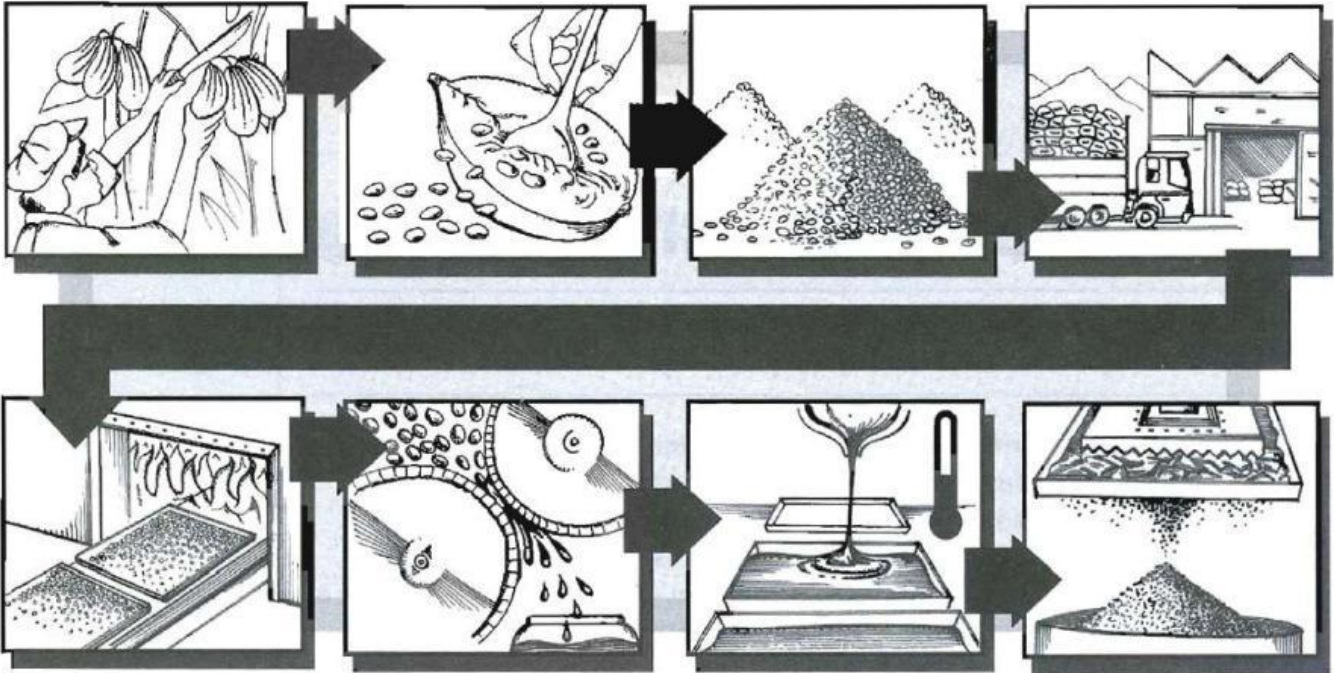
8

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