

# RELATIVE CLAUSES

## SUBJECT OR OBJECT

Relative clauses give extra information about a noun in the main clause. Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun (*who, which, that, whom, whose*).

The relative pronoun can be the subject of the clause:

*That's the couple **who** bought my house.*

The couple (**subject**) bought my house (**object**).



Or the relative pronoun can be the object of the clause:

*That's the car **that** I used to own.*

I (**subject**) used to own the car (**object**).



- Combining sentences.

Note how sentences are combined.

**Subject:** *This is Jill. **She** bought my car.*

*Jill is the person **who** bought my car.*

*"She" is not repeated, as the person is the subject.*

**Object:** *That is Jill's **car**. I used to own **it**.*

*That's the car **that** I used to own.*

*"It" is not repeated, as the car is the object.*

## DEFINING OR NON-DEFINING

Defining relative clauses:

- Give important information which tells us exactly what is being referred to.  
*That book **which** you lent me is really good.*

This indicates which book we are talking about. Without the relative clause, it might be difficult to understand the meaning.

- Omitting the relative pronoun

In a defining relative clause we can leave out the relative pronoun if it is the object of the clause.

*That's **the flat** (**that**) I used to own.*

- We cannot miss out the relative pronoun if it is the subject of the clause.

*That's the woman **who** bought my washing machine.*

## Non-defining clauses

- add extra information
- they are separated by commas in writing, and by a pause on either side (where the commas are) in speaking.

*"The novel, **which** I hadn't read, was still on the shelf."*

(This gives extra information about the book. We could miss out the relative clause and the meaning would still be clear.)

- In a non-defining relative clause we cannot leave out the relative pronoun.

**WHICH, WHO AND THAT**

- *That* instead of *which*

When we talk about things, *that* is often used instead of *which*. This is very common in speech.

*Is this the tablet **that** you bought?*

- *That* instead of *who*

When we talk about people, *that* can be used instead of *who*. This is less common, but we still do it, especially in speech.

*Have you met the boy **that** Sally is going to marry?*

- *Which* in non-defining clauses

**"THAT" CANNOT BE USED TO INTRODUCE A NON-DEFINING CLAUSE.**

*The hotel, **which** / ~~that~~ was a hundred years old, was very comfortable.*

- Prepositions

*That* cannot be used after a preposition.

*This is the laptop (**that/which**) I paid £1200 **for**. (speech)*

*This is the laptop **for which** / ~~for that~~ I paid £1200. (formal)*

*Whom* and *whose*

**WHOM** is the object form of *who*. It has to be used after prepositions. Its use is formal and quite rare.

*This is the person (**who**) I sold my car **to**. (speech)*

*This is the person **to whom** I sold my car. (formal)*

- **WHOSE** means *of whom*, and usually refers to people.

*This is Jackie. **HER SISTER** is staying with us.*

*This is Jackie, **WHOSE SISTER** is staying with us.*

**LET'S PRACTICE**

A- WRITE IN THE BOX any relative pronouns **that can be left out** in these sentences. If it can't be left out write: **NONE**.

1. I think **that** my boss is the person **who** I admire most.
2. Harry, **who** was tired, went to bed very early.
3. We're taking the train **that** leaves at 6.00.
4. Have you seen the book **that** I left here on the desk?
5. The film **which** we liked most was the French one.
6. My radio, **which** isn't very old, has suddenly stopped working.
7. The clothes **which** you left behind are at the reception desk.
8. The couple **who** met me at the station took me out to dinner.
9. Last week I ran into an old friend **who** I hadn't seen for ages.
10. Don't cook the meat **that** I put in the freezer – it's for the dog.

**Practice  
Makes  
Perfect**



## RELATIVE CLAUSES

B- Replace the relative pronouns in *italics* with **that**, where possible. If it is not possible write **NOT POSSIBLE**.

### REMEMBER

- **That** instead of *which*

When we talk about things, *that* is often used instead of *which*. This is very common in speech.

*Is this the tablet **that** you bought?*



- **That** instead of *who*

When we talk about people, *that* can be used instead of *who*. This is less common, but we still do it, especially in speech.

*Have you met the boy **that** Sally is going to marry?*

1. This is the magazine *which* I told you about.
2. John's flat, *which* is in the same block as mine, is much larger.
3. The girl *whose* bag I offered to carry turned out to be an old friend.
4. The policeman *who* arrested her had recognised her car.
5. I work with someone *who* knows you.
6. We don't sell goods *which* have been damaged.
7. Brighton, *which* is on the south coast, is a popular holiday resort.
8. I don't know anyone *whose* clothes would fit you.
9. There's a cafe near here *which* serves very good meals.
10. People *who* park outside get given parking tickets.

C- Look at the sentences in ex. B and write if the relative pronouns **WHO/WHICH** is the **SUBJECT** or the **OBJECT** of the clause. (sentences 3 and 8 are not considered.)

- |          |           |          |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____  | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____  | 7. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 10. _____ |          |

D- CHOOSE the most suitable word in each sentence.

1. My friend Jackie, *that/who/whose* parents live in Glasgow, invited me to spend Christmas in Scotland.
2. Here's the computer program *that/whom/whose* I told you about.
3. I don't believe the story *that/who/whom* he told us.
4. Pam comes from LA, *that/who/which* is near San Francisco.
5. This is the gun with *that/whom/which* the murder was committed.
6. Have you received the parcel *whom/whose/which* Sam sent you?
7. Is this the person *who/which/whose* you asked me about?
8. That's the boy *that/who/whose* brother sits next to me at school.
9. The meal, *that/which/whose* wasn't very tasty, was quite expensive.

10. We really enjoyed the play *that/who/whose* we went to see.