

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative Pronouns introduce relative clauses. Relative clauses are of two kinds: *Defining* and *Non-defining*.

Defining Relative Clauses

These describe the preceding noun in such a way as to distinguish it from other nouns of the same class. A clause of this kind is essential to the clear understanding of the noun:

The man *who told me this* refused to give his name.

Who told me this is the relative clause. If we omit this, it is not clear what man we are talking about. Notice that there is no comma between a noun and the defining relative clause:

The noise *that he made* woke everybody up.

Relative Pronouns used in Defining Relative Clauses

For persons	Subject: Object: Possessive:	who that whom who that whose
For things	Subject: Object: Possessive:	which that which that whose of which

Use for persons: **who** or **that**. **Who** is normally used as a subject.

The man *who robbed you* is called Sykes.

That is much less usual than **who** as a subject except after superlatives and after: *all, nobody, no one, someone, somebody, anybody*, etc., when either **who** or **that** can be used:

All who / that heard him were delighted with him.

As an object: **whom**, **who** or **that**. The technically correct form is **whom**, but this is considered very formal and seldom used in spoken English. Instead we use **who** or **that** (**that** being more usual than **who**) and it is still more common to omit the relative pronoun all together.

The man *whom* I saw was called Smith.

The man *who* I saw was called Smith.

The man *that* I saw ...

The man I saw ... (relative pronoun omitted)

With a preposition: **whom** or **that**. It is more usual to move the preposition to the end of the clause but it is still more common to omit the relative altogether.

The man *who(m)* I bought it *from* told me to oil it.

The man *that* I bought it *from* told me to oil it.
The man I bought it *from* told me to oil it.

Possessive: **whose** is the only possible form:

People *whose* rents have been raised can appeal.

Use for things:

Subject: **which** or **that**.

This is the picture *which* / *that* caused such a sensation.

Object: **which** or **that** or no relative at all.

The car *which* / *that* I hired broke down after five minutes.

The car I hired broke ...

Which is hardly ever used after *all*, *much*, *little*, *everything*, *none*, *no* and compounds of *no*, or after superlatives. Instead we use **that**, or omit the relative altogether, if it is a Direct Object.

All the apples *that* fall are eaten by pigs.

This is the best hotel (*that*) I know.

With a preposition: **which** or **that** or no relative (the same as for persons).

The relative pronoun **what**.

What: the thing that / the things that, tec.

The things that we saw astonished us = *What* we saw astonished us.

Non-Defining Relative Clauses.

They are placed after nouns which are definite already. They do not therefore define the noun, but merely add something to it giving some more information about it. They are not essential in the sentences and can be omitted without causing confusion. They are separated from their noun by commas.

Relative Pronouns

	Subject	Object	Possessive
For persons	who	whom, who	whose
For things	which	which	of which, whose

Use for persons:

Subject: **who**

Only **who** can be used. Note the commas:

My gardener, *who* is very pessimistic, says that there will be no apples this year.

Object: **whom, who**

It must always be used and cannot be omitted: **whom** is the correct form though **who** is sometimes used in conversation:

She introduced me to her husband, *whom* I hadn't seen before.

Object with preposition: **whom**

Mary, *with whom* I drove home, has a Rolls Royce.

Mary, *who(m)* I drove home *with*, has a Rolls Royce. (more common in conversation)

Possessive: **whose**

Chopin, *whose* works are world famous, composed some of his music here.

Use for things

Subject: **which**

His new house, *which* is absolutely enormous, has no running water.

Object: **which**

It cannot be omitted.

Julius Caesar, *which* you are going to see tomorrow, was written by Shakespeare.

With a preposition: **which**

This sherry, *for which* I paid one pound fifty, is awful.

This sherry, *which* I paid one pound fifty *for*, is awful. (more common in conversation)

Possessive: **whose** or **of which**

Whose can be used, especially for animals, and **of which** for things.

My dog, *whose* temper is very uncertain, often bites the judges at dog shows.

His thesis, *of which* the last hundred pages are nonsense, will probably win him a lot of notoriety.

The connective relatives are **who** and **which**

I met Mary. She gave me this.

I met Mary *who* gave me this.

I bought this map. It helped me a lot.

I bought this map *which* helped me a lot.

Which can refer to a whole clause:

He said that he had never been here before, *which* was not true.

Commas are used with connective relatives.

What cannot be used as a connective relative, and neither can **that**.

Relative adverbs

The relative adverbs **when**, **where** and **why** are used to replace a preposition + the relative pronoun **which**.

When replaces **in / on which**, used for time.

Where replaces **in which** or **at which**, used for place.

Why replaces **for which**, used for reasons.

The year *in which* he died = the year *when* he died.

The day *on which* she arrived = the day *when* she arrived.

The house *in which* he lived = the house *where* he lived.

Finland, *where* he spends his holidays, has lots of lakes.

The reason *why* he came is not very convincing.

EXERCISES

I. Join the following sentences using relatives.

1. She's a nice old lady. Her parents were born in New York.

2. Did you pick up the keys? They were on the table.

3. A man brought in a small girl. Her hand had been cut by flying glass.

4. Cathy Freeman was an aborigine athlete. She lit the Olympic flame in Sydney.

5. Mayka is a Spanish woman. Her husband is Egyptian.

6. Iván is a boy. I go out with Iván.

7. She slept in a hotel. It was very comfortable.

8. Tom had been driving all day. He was tired and wanted to stop.

II. Choose the most appropriate relative pronoun. Use *that* only if necessary.

1. John, _____ is my younger brother, went to do the shopping.

2. His work, _____ is very difficult, exhausted him.

3. Tom, _____ mother is French, speaks the language very well.

4. Mr Smith, _____ I was talking to, is a carpenter.

5. Your problem, _____ I have thought about a lot, is a difficult one.

6. Our friends, _____ advice we sought, were very helpful.

7. It was there that he met Mary _____ is now his wife.

8. The treaty, _____ was signed yesterday, is an excellent one.

9. His father, _____ works very hard, has just bought this house.

10. Yesterday I met Harry, _____ works nearby.

III. Combine the sentences using a relative clause. Use relative pronouns only where necessary. Note that you have to use commas in some of the sentences.

1. We spent our holiday in Scotland last year. Scotland is in the north of Great Britain.

Last year we *spent our holidays in Scotland, which is in the north of Great Britain.*

2. People live in Scotland. They are called Scots.

- The people _____
3. We first went to Edinburgh. Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland.
We first _____
 4. Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh. He wrote the Sherlock Holmes stories.
Arthur Conan Doyle _____
 5. Then we visited a lake. It is in the Highlands.
The lake _____
 6. Loch Ness is 37 km long. People know it for its friendly monster.
Loch Ness _____
 7. There we met an old man. He told us that he had seen Nessie.
An old man _____
 8. We then travelled to a mountain. The mountain is near the town of Fort William.
We then _____
 9. The mountain is the highest mountain in Great Britain. It is called Ben Nevis.
The mountain _____
 10. I sent you a postcard. It was written on the summit of Ben Nevis.
The postcard _____

IV. Combine the following pairs or groups of sentences by means of relative pronouns, making any necessary changes.

1. His girlfriend turned out to be an enemy spy. He trusted her absolutely.

2. We'll have to walk across the frontier. This will be difficult.

3. We lit a fire. It soon dried out our clothes.

4. I played with a girl. She was very nice.

5. I've got a friend. Her mother is in hospital.

6. A vegetarian is a person. This person doesn't eat meat.

V. Complete the sentences using the information in brackets.

1. (we met some people) *The **people we met** were very nice.*
2. (I'm wearing shoes) *The shoes are not very comfortable.*
3. (you're reading a book) *What's the name?*
4. (I wrote a letter to her) *She didn't get the I*
5. (they gave me an umbrella) *I've lost*
6. (they invited some people to dinner)
The people didn't come.

VI. Combine the following pairs or groups of sentences, using relative pronouns.

9. My grandmother is 90 years old. She has never been ill.

10. The Earth is a planet. It moves round the sun.

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11. This is the place. We should build our house here.

 12. Mary loves studying. She is my younger sister.

 13. I work for a firm. This firm makes cars.

 14. I met an old lady. Her dog had disappeared.

 15. A grocer's is a shop. You can buy fruit there.

 16. In February we'll be very busy. It's the shortest month.

VII. Join these sentences with *who, whose, which* or *where*.

1. Yesterday I met Robbie James. Robbie James is the drummer in a new pop group called 'Street Level'.
Yesterday I met Robbie James, who is the drummer in a new pop group called 'Street Level'.
2. The house has been for sale since last February. The house is very expensive.

3. Susan Rose has just won £ 100,000. Susan Rose's brother Paul works in my office.

4. I went to Munich. I had always wanted to visit Munich.

5. A cup is an object. We drink out of it.

6. Mrs Greeman's dog is mad. It bit a young girl yesterday.

7. They rowed across the Atlantic. This had never been done before.

8. The doctor came by. We didn't know him.

VIII. Combine the following pairs or groups of sentences, using relative pronouns.

1. She was dancing with a student. He had a slight limp.

2. Mike speaks French very well. Mike's mother comes from Paris.

3. Last summer we went to Whitby. We stayed at The Queen's Hotel in Whitby.

4. My uncle Peter is coming to see me next week. My uncle Peter lives in Scotland.

5. I am looking after some children. They are terribly spoilt.
