

RELATIVE CLAUSES

1 Defining relative clauses with *who*, *which* and *that*

Defining relative clauses tell us some essential information about the things or people they refer to:
The picture that hangs next to Margaret's portrait is the one I like best.

If we remove the words that hangs next to Margaret's portrait, we don't know which picture Jasper is talking about.

Defining relative clauses:

- use the relative pronouns *who* for people, *which* for things and *that* for things and people:
There's the woman who sold me the bracelet.
I'm looking for a website which has the words of pop songs.
Where did you get the coat that you were wearing?
They're the people that run the local café.

- may have *who*, *which* or *that* as the subject or object of the relative clause:
The picture which/that hangs next to Margaret's portrait ... (which/that is the subject of the relative clause)
She's the woman who/that he married. (who/that is the object of the relative clause, and he is the subject)

- very often omit the relative pronoun when it is the object of the relative clause:
The painting we're looking at shows Edmund.
or The painting which/that we're looking at shows Edmund.

- are never separated from the rest of the sentence by commas:
(not The painting that we're looking at shows Edmund.)

- are used in writing and speaking.

2 Non-defining relative clauses with *who* and *which*

Non-defining relative clauses tell us some extra information about the things or people they refer to:
The next painting shows Edmund's wife Margaret, who he married in 1605.

If we remove the words *who he married in 1605*, we still know who Jasper is talking about. It is Edmund's wife Margaret.

Non-defining relative clauses:

- always use the relative pronouns *who* for people and *which* for things:
My friend Tom, who works for a software company, earns a good salary.
This company makes all kinds of phones and chargers, which are sold in fifty different countries.

- may have *who* or *which* (but never *that*) as the subject or object of the relative clause:
The building, which is very old, costs a lot of money to repair. (not that+very old)
The café's owner, who we've just seen, enjoys meeting visitors. (not that we've just seen)

- never omit the relative pronoun:
This small café, which was opened three years ago, has the best coffee in town.

- must be separated from the rest of the sentence by commas:
My best friend, who works at the café on Saturday, says it's always busy.
- are more common in writing than in speaking.

▲ The relative pronoun refers back to a person/thing mentioned previously. We do not add any extra pronoun in the relative clause:

This is the painting that I like best. (not the painting that I like best)
 The painting shows Edmund's wife, who he married in 1605. (not Edmund's wife, who he married her)
 This café, which opened two years ago, has the best coffee in town. (not This café, which it opened)

3 *whose*, *whom*, *when*, *where* and *why* in relative clauses

- both defining and non-defining relative clauses can:
 • begin with *whose* (instead of *his/hers/theirs*), *when* (for times) and *where* (for places):
William, whose wife Jane was a famous beauty, had nine children.
Here they are in this picture from the year when the youngest was born.
 • begin with *whom* (for people) as the object of the clause (this is mainly in written English, and is increasingly rare):
The man whom we asked for directions was extremely helpful.
His girlfriend, whom he neglected, became very depressed.

A defining relative clause can:
 • begin with *why* after the words *the reason*:
This victory was the reason why he became a national hero.
 • often omit the words *when* and *why* (but not *where*):
I remember the day (when) I met you.
That was the reason (why) we went there.
She returned to the village where she was born. (not the village she was born)

4 Prepositions in relative clauses

When there is a preposition attached to a relative pronoun:
 • we usually put the preposition at the end of the clause:
I had a friend I shared everything with.
Peter Frost, who (or whom) my father used to work for, has become a government minister.
 In formal English, we sometimes put the preposition at the beginning of the clause, followed by *which* (for things) or *whom* (for people):
I had a friend with whom I shared everything.
Peter Jones, for whom my father used to work, has become a government minister.
 The family history, about which I cared very little, was Jasper's main interest.
 There may be a fault in the cable to which the printer is connected.

▲ We cannot use *that* after a preposition in a relative clause:
 The Conference Room, in which the meeting was held, was not really big enough. (not in that the meeting was held)

We can sometimes use preposition + *which* instead of *where*:
 This is the house where Jasper used to live. = the house in which Jasper used to live / the house (which) Jasper used to live in (not the house which Jasper used to live in)
 She showed us the town where she was born. = the town in which she was born / the town (which) she was born in. (not the town which she was born in)

5 Numbers and pronouns + *of whom* / *of which*

Non-defining relative clauses can start with a number or a pronoun such as *all*, *some*, *most*, *none*, *each*, *a few*, *neither* + *of whom* or *of which*. This is more common in writing than in speech:
 The castle contained a lot of paintings, two of which were extremely valuable.
 The best students, all of whom are over eighteen, will go to university in the autumn.
 Free tickets were given out to a group of football fans, one of whom was my brother.
 The cakes, each of which was decorated in a different colour, looked very appetising.
 My uncle's stories, most of which I'd heard before, were extremely boring.
 I was offered a choice of two rooms, neither of which looked very clean.

Grammar exercises

1 Complete this email with **who** or **which**. If **who** or **which** can be left out, put it in brackets.

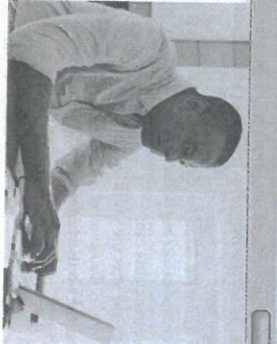
CJT@newworld.com
 To: Decor.trotter@kwikmail.co.uk
 Subject: decorating job problems
 Dear Mr Trotter,

I have a number of complaints about the work (1) which your company did in my house during the past week.

You promised that the men (2) carried out the work would arrive by 8.00. As I explained to you, I have to catch the bus (3) leaves at 8.15. On three days the men arrived after eight, so I missed my bus and some of my customers, (4) were waiting to talk to me, were extremely annoyed.

Your foreman lost the written instructions (5) I gave him, none of (6) he appears to have understood. The paint (7) he used for the hall was the one (8) should have been used in the kitchen. The sitting-room wallpaper, (9) I had chosen with great care, is the wrong way up. My bathroom, (10) you and I agreed did not need redecorating, has been painted.

These mistakes must be put right immediately. Please contact me as soon as possible.
 Yours,
 Cecil J Trubshaw



2 Use a relative pronoun from the box and match the two halves of these sentences.

- | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| where | when | which | which | who | whose | why |
|-------|------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-----|
- I don't really enjoy films. A you didn't tell me about your engagement.
 - I often go to parties. B I was late for school!
 - My teacher usually explains vocabulary. C show a lot of violence.
 - Can you remember any occasion D speaks five languages?
 - I can't understand the reason E involved working in the evenings.
 - Have you ever met anyone F they play very loud music.
 - I envy people G I don't understand.
 - I would hate to have a job H parents buy a car for them.

3 Choose the correct sentence from each pair.

- a Have you ever been back to the town where you were born in?

b Have you ever been back to the town where you were born? ✓
- a My left ankle which I broke last winter is still giving me trouble.

b My left ankle, which I broke last winter, is still giving me trouble.
- a Is that the man you were talking about?

b Is that the man you were talking about him?
- a I'm looking for the book you lent me last week.

b I'm looking for the book what you lent me last week.
- a This expensive silk jacket, that I only bought last week, has lost three buttons.

b This expensive silk jacket, which I only bought last week, has lost three buttons.
- a The laptops, two of which belonged to teachers, were taken from the school office.

b The laptops, two of them belonged to teachers, were taken from the school office.
- a The friend that I want to introduce you to her is away this weekend.

b The friend I want to introduce you to is away this weekend.

4 Combine each pair of sentences by making the second sentence into a non-defining relative clause.

- My aunt loves ice cream with chocolate sauce. She is rather greedy.
My aunt, who is rather greedy, loves ice cream with chocolate sauce.
- My uncle's cottage has been damaged by floods. We usually spend our holidays there.
My uncle's cottage, which has been damaged by floods, is where we usually spend our holidays.
- The chemistry exam was actually quite easy. We had been worrying about it.
The chemistry exam, which was actually quite easy, was what we had been worrying about.
- My brother got into a fight near the school. His classmates had been teasing him.
My brother, who had been teased by his classmates, got into a fight near the school.
- There are dreadful traffic jams during the summer. Everyone goes on holiday then.
Everyone goes on holiday then, which is why there are dreadful traffic jams during the summer.
- My parents enjoyed that film very much. They don't often go to the cinema.
That film, which my parents enjoyed very much, is one that they don't often go to the cinema.