

## Unit 9

### Relative clauses

A relative clause is used to add extra information. Instead of giving the information in two sentences, we can combine the two pieces of information in one sentence using a relative clause.

**The man was so boring. He sat next to me the whole journey.**  
**The man who sat next to me the whole journey was so boring.**

#### Relative pronouns

- A relative clause starts with a relative pronoun: *who (whom), which, that, whose where, when, why* or no relative pronoun (see 6 below).
- The choice of relative pronoun depends on whether
  - the relative clause is defining or non-defining.
  - it refers to a person or a thing.
  - it is the subject or object of the relative clause.

	A Defining		B Non-defining	
	Person	Thing	Person	Thing
1 Subject	<i>who / that</i>	<i>which / that</i>	<i>who</i>	<i>which</i>
2 Object	$\emptyset$ / <i>who(m)</i> / <i>that</i>	$\emptyset$ / <i>which</i> / <i>that</i>	<i>who(m)</i>	<i>which</i>
3 Possessive	<i>whose</i> (of which)	<i>whose</i> (of which)	<i>whose</i> (of which)	<i>whose</i> (of which)

#### NOTE

- A *Who* and *which* are more usual than *that* in writing.  
 B *Whom* is very formal and is used mainly in writing.

#### Defining and non-defining relative clauses

- Defining clauses**  
 The information given in a defining relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence. It makes clear which person or thing we are talking about. For example, if we omit the relative clause in this sentence, we do not know which man the speaker is talking about.  
*The man who came to the wedding dressed in jeans is Simon's brother.*  
 The defining relative clause gives us this information.
- Non-defining clauses**  
 The information given in a non-defining relative clause is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. If we omit the relative clause, it is still clear who we are talking about.  
*Mr White, who has been head teacher at the school for 40 years, is retiring at the end of term.*

#### NOTES

- A Defining relative clauses are common in spoken and written English. However, non-defining relative clauses are less common in spoken English.  
 B In non-defining relative clauses, *which* can refer back to a whole clause.  
*He climbed the mountain wearing only a T-shirt and jeans, which was a stupid thing to do.* (The fact that he climbed the mountain wearing only a T-shirt and jeans was a stupid thing to do.)

- C Commas are put before and after the non-defining relative clause, unless this is also the end of the sentence.  
*We stayed at the Carlton, which is a five-star hotel in the city centre.*
- 3 *where, when, why*  
 A *where* can introduce a defining or non-defining relative clause which follows the word 'place' or any noun which refers to a place, for example, 'house', 'restaurant', 'road'.  
*Wendy was brought up in Scotland, where she was born, but later emigrated to Australia.*  
*If you visit Yorkshire, it is worth visiting the house where the Brontës lived.*  
 B *when* can introduce a defining or non-defining relative clause which follows the word 'time' or any noun which refers to a period of time, for example, 'year', 'century', 'winter'.  
*June is the month (when) many couples get married in the UK.*  
*The town is quieter after lunch, when everyone is having a siesta.*  
 C *why* can introduce a defining relative clause after the word 'reason'.  
*Do you know (the reason) why Kate's changed her mind?*

#### 4 Relative clauses and prepositions

- A Informal use
- In spoken English and informal written English, prepositions usually come at the end of the relative clause.  
*The hotel which we stayed at while we were in London is very expensive.*
  - In informal defining relative clauses the pronoun is usually omitted.  
*The man  $\emptyset$  I spoke to gave me different information.*  
*The letter  $\emptyset$  you refer to has not been answered to my satisfaction.*
- B Formal use
- In formal written English, prepositions usually come before the relative pronoun.  
*The Savoy Hotel, at which many celebrities stay when they are in the capital, is very expensive.*
  - In formal defining relative clauses with prepositions we use *whom* to refer to people and *which* to refer to things. The pronoun cannot be omitted.  
*The man to whom I spoke gave me different information.*  
*The letter to which you refer has not been answered to my satisfaction.*
  - In formal non-defining relative clauses with prepositions we also use *whom* to refer to people and *which* to refer to things. The pronoun cannot be omitted.  
*The hotel manager, to whom I spoke about the problem, suggested I write to you.*  
*The fact that the hotel was undergoing renovation during our stay, about which we had not been informed, completely ruined our holiday.*

- 5 Relative clauses after numbers and certain words
- A Non-defining relative clauses can be introduced by a number + *of* + the following words: *all, any, both, each, either, (a) few, many, most, much, neither, none, some*. They are followed by the relative pronoun *whom* for people and *which* for things.  
*Dozens of people had been invited, ten of whom I knew.*  
*I fell asleep during the lecture, most of which was incomprehensible.*
- B Defining relative clauses can be introduced by the following words: *all, any(thing), every(thing), (a) few, little, many, much, no(thing), none, some(thing)* and superlative adjectives.  
 We usually use the relative pronoun *that* after these words. When the relative pronoun is the object of the relative clause, *that* is commonly omitted.  
*It was something that could have happened to anyone.*  
*It was the most difficult exam (that) I've ever taken.*
- 6 Omitting pronouns from relative clauses  $\emptyset$   
 Omitting relative pronouns is common in spoken or informal written English in
- A defining relative clauses when the relative pronoun is the object of its clause.  
*The party  $\emptyset$  I went to last night didn't finish till late.*  
*The tree  $\emptyset$  the council cut down by mistake was over fifty years old..*  
*Do you know the reason  $\emptyset$  they've decided to put off the wedding?*  
*August is the month  $\emptyset$  most people take their annual holiday.*
- B defining relative clauses with a form of the verb *be*, when both the *be* part of the verb and the relative pronoun can be omitted. This is sometimes called a 'reduced' relative clause.  
*The man who is standing on his own over there is Amy's brother.*  
*The car which was used in the robbery was discovered abandoned in a nearby field.*

- Command  
*'Don't interrupt me!'*  
*He told me not to interrupt him.*
- Request  
*'Could you close the door please?'*  
*She asked me to close the door.*
- Warning  
*'If you tell anyone, I'll ...!'*  
*She warned me not to tell anyone.*

#### NOTES

- A The structure after *ask* is different depending on whether we are reporting a request or a question.  
*'Can you remind me, please?'* (request)  
*He asked me to remind him.*  
*'Can you come tomorrow?'* (question)  
*She asked me if I could come the next day.*
- B The structure after *tell* is different depending on whether we are reporting a command or a statement.  
*'Come on! Hurry up!'* (command)  
*She told us to hurry up.*  
*'It doesn't start till eight.'* (statement)  
*He told us (that) it didn't start until eight.*

#### Reporting suggestions

We can report suggestions with the verb *suggest* + clause.

For example, to report 'Let's stay in.':

*She suggested that we (should) stay in.*

*She suggested that we stayed in.*

*She suggested staying in.*

#### NOTE

You cannot use the infinitive after *suggest*.

#### so / such

We use *so* and *such* to add emphasis.

*Everyone was so friendly.*

*They were such friendly people.*

*so*

*so* is used with

- adjectives and adverbs.  
*Our journey was so quick.*  
*Our journey went so quickly.*
- much* / *little* (+ uncountable noun).  
*I didn't realize we had so much time.*  
*She didn't realize she had so little money left.*
- many* / *few* (+ plural countable noun).  
*So many people applied for that job, but there were so few jobs available.*

*such*

*such* is used with

- a* + adjective + singular noun.  
*We saw such a good film last night.*
- adjective + plural countable noun / uncountable noun.  
*Everyone was wearing such bright clothes.*  
*We had such dreadful weather on our holiday.*
- a lot (of...)* + plural countable noun / uncountable noun.  
*We had such a lot of things to do, we didn't know where to start.*  
*He won such a lot of money on the lottery that he could afford a luxury apartment.*