

RELATIVE CLAUSES – B1

Main theme addressed	In this lesson, you will learn about 2 types of relative clauses. It is important as it allows you to choose the right relative pronoun.
Key Goals	Here is an outline of what you will learn today: 1. Introduction: what is a relative clause? 2. Defining relative clauses 3. Non-defining relative clauses

1. Introduction: what is a relative clause?

A relative clause is **a section of a sentence** that adds meaning to it, but in terms of grammar, the sentence would still be correct if this section was removed.

There are **two types** of relative clauses: **defining clauses** and **non-defining clauses**.

2. Defining relative clauses

The characteristics of a **defining clause** are:

- it tells about which specific unit we are talking about in a group,
- if it is removed from the sentence, the meaning of the sentence changes significantly,
- we do not use commas or parenthesis to separate a defining clause from the rest of a sentence.

The following pronouns start a defining relative clause and refer to a noun that appeared previously in the sentence:

- to refer to a **person**:
 - use “**who**” or “**that**” if the person is the **subject** of the verb,
 - use “**who**”, “**whom**” or “**that**” if the person is the **object** of the verb,
 - use “**whose**” if you refer to **something that belongs to the person**.

Examples:

She’s the one who told me I was pretty!

- to refer to a **thing**:
 - use “**which**” or “**that**” if the thing is the **subject** of the verb,

Examples:

The cookies (that) I had this morning were soft and chewy.

- use “**which**” or “**that**” if the thing is the **object** of the verb

Examples:

He told me about the house which is for sale.

- use “**whose**” if you refer to **something that belongs to the person**

Examples:

This is the trainer whose horse won the race.

- to refer to a **place**, use “**where**”

Examples:

I’m going to the swimming pool **where** I’ll meet Jenny.

- to refer to a **time**, use “**when**”

Examples:

I am not sure **when** the train arrives.

- to refer to a **reason**, use “**why**”:

Examples:

I’m not sure **why** he’s so happy to see this movie.

Note that “who” and “that” can be omitted when the relative pronoun comes right after the subject

Why are there several possible pronouns in some cases?

It might seem confusing at first that in some cases, several pronouns can be used. Although there are all grammatically correct, they belong to different levels of language:

- “who”, “whom” and “which” are often replaced by “that” in informal or spoken English,
- “whom” is very formal and is mostly used in written English.

Exercise:

Fill the gap in the following sentences with the appropriate pronoun. Mark an “X” if you want to indicate “no pronoun” instead. There might be several possible answers.

1. It’s uncommon to meet children _____ do not like sweets!
2. This is the museum _____ I visited last year.
3. I don’t know _____ I’m coming home today, I have so much work to do!
4. Iron Man is the character _____ bravery saved the day.
5. Winter is the time of the year _____ I eat the biggest amount of food.
6. Chocolate is the reason _____ I exercise.

3. Non-defining relative clauses

The characteristics of a **non-defining clause** are:

- it gives information about someone or something in general,
- if it is removed from the sentence, the meaning of the sentence would not change significantly but there would be less detail,
- we often use do not use commas or parenthesis to separate a defining clause from the rest of a sentence.

The following pronouns start a non-defining relative clause and refer to a noun that appeared previously in the sentence:

- to refer to a **person**:

- use “**who**” if the person is the subject of the verb

Examples:

My cat, **who** is tricolor, has quite a temper!

- use “**who**” or “**whom**” if the person is the object of the verb

Examples:

I saw the man **whom** you met last week.

- use “**whose**” if you talk about something that belongs to the person

Examples:

I saw the woman **whose** husband died last week.

- to refer to a **thing**, use “**which**” regardless of whether the thing is the subject or the object of the verb,

Examples:

The children received a lot of presents for Christmas, **which** they opened immediately.

- to refer to a **place**, use “**where**”

Examples:

I’ve just come back from London, where I saw Kit Harrington in the tube!

Remember:

- you **cannot omit** the pronoun in a non-defining clause,
- you **cannot replace** the relative pronouns with “**that**” in a non-defining clause,
- a non-defining clause can be introduced by expressions **followed by the relative pronoun**. For example: “all of”, “**any of**”, “**some of**”, “**a few**”, “**many of**”, etc.
- when a non-defining clause starts with “**which**”, it can **refer either to one word or the information mentioned previously** in the sentence.

Exercise:

Fill the gap in the following sentences with the appropriate pronoun. Mark an “X” if you want to indicate “no pronoun” instead. There might be several possible answers.

1. John did really well in physics, _____ is a good surprise!
2. There were a lot of people at the concert, many of _____ wore the t-shirt of the band.
3. I went to Disneyland during the holidays, _____ I met Donald Duck.
4. The dog, _____ leash is red, loves a good hug.
5. My friend, _____ plays basketball, is not that tall actually.
6. This park, _____ a lot of couples come, is my favorite place to go running.



Learn More:

<https://www.ef.com/wwen/english-resources/english-grammar/relative-clauses/>

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/relative-pronouns-and-relative-clauses>

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/relative-clauses.html>