

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative pronouns link two sentences (the main clause and the relative clause) that have the same noun or pronoun. There are two types of relative clauses: a **defining**, or **restrictive relative clause** and a **non-defining**, or **non-restrictive relative clause**.

- 1. Defining relative clause** gives essential information about the subject in the **main clause**. Without this information, the meaning of the sentence changes.

They talked about friends **who** they met on their trip.

Main clause: They talked about friends

Defining relative clause: who they met on their trip

*The defining relative clause, starting with relative pronoun **who**, gives more information about "friends" in the main clause.*

She bought a house **that** needs extensive renovation.

Main clause: She bought a house

Defining relative clause: that needs extensive renovation

*The defining relative clause, starting with relative pronoun **that**, gives more information about "house" in the main clause.*

Sometime the defining relative clause can be in the middle of the main clause:

The movie **that** I just saw is haunting.

Main clause: The movie is haunting.

Defining relative clause: that I just saw

*The defining relative clause, starting with relative pronoun **that**, gives more information about "movie" in the main clause.*

The **common relative pronouns** **that, who, whom, which, whose** can be used as *subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, objects of prepositions, and possessives*. In casual speech, **that** often replaces **who** or **which**.

I met the man. The man was in the news.

I met the man **who** was in the news. (**who** is the subject in “who was in the news”)

I met the man **that** was in the news. (**that** replaces **who** in casual speech)

I met the man. The reporter interviewed the man.

I met the man **whom** the reporter interviewed. (**whom** is the object in “whom the reporter interviewed”)

I met the man **that** the reporter interviewed. (**that** replaces **whom** in casual speech)

I met the man. The reporter gave the man an interview.

I met the man to whom the reporter gave an interview. (**whom** is the indirect object in “to whom the reporter gave an interview”).

I met the man that the reporter gave an interview to. (**that** replaces **whom** in casual speech)

I met the man. The reporter talked about the man.

I met the man about **whom** the reporter talked. (**whom** is object of the preposition)

I met the man **that** the reporter talked about. (**that** replaces **whom** in casual speech)

I met the man. The man’s interview is in the news.

I met the man **whose** interview is in the news. (**whose** is the possessive of **who**)

*In a preposition phrase, the preposition can stand in front of **whom** or **which**, or at the end of the relative clause.*

I like the subject about **which** I am studying.

I like the subject **which** I am studying about.

I like the subject **that** I am studying **about**.

(the preposition **about** always stands at the end of the relative clause if “**that**” is used)

I love my parents **for whom** I study hard.

I love my parents **whom** I study hard **for**.

If the relative pronoun is the object of the relative clause, it can be left out.

I met the man **whom** the reporter interviewed. (**whom** is the object in “whom the reporter interviewed”) -> I met the man the reporter interviewed.

I met the man about **whom** the reporter talked. (**whom** is object of the preposition) -> I met the man the reporter talked about. (the preposition **about** must stand at the end of the truncated relative clause)

2. non-defining, or non-restrictive relative clause merely adds extra information rather than changes the meaning of the main clause.

We met Paul, **who** had recently been hired by our company.

Main clause: We met Paul.

Non-defining relative clause: who had recently been hired by our company (additional but not essential information)

The car, **which** she has just purchased, has lots of problems.

Main clause: The car has lots of problems.

Non-defining relative clause: which she has just purchased (additional but not essential information)

NOTICE:

1. Non-defining relative clause can come in the middle of a sentence, or at the end. If the relative clause comes after the whole main clause, a comma must go in the middle of the main and relative clauses. If the non-defining relative clause comes in the middle of a sentence, commas must be placed on either side of it.

2. The relative pronoun **that** should not be used in non-defining relative clauses even though in casual speech people might have the habit of substituting **that** for **which** and **who**.

Practice:

Combine the sentences using the relative pronouns **that, who, whom, which** and **whose**.

1. His friends gave him a lift. His friends just arrived.
2. This is the friend. I told you about the friend.
3. This was the event. The event started the riot.
4. These were the soldiers. The soldiers defended the city.
5. These were the soldiers. The soldiers' duty is to defend the city.
6. They found the treasure. The treasure belonged to Black Beard.
7. I visited India. India is the birthplace of my wife.
8. He has proof. The proof shows his ownership.
9. She likes the attentions. He showers her with attentions.
10. He bought her the purse. She has been eyeing the purse.
11. She finally met the man. Her dad would approve the man.
12. She finally met the man. Her dad was telling her about the man.
13. He wears the lucky shirt to the interview. She had picked out the lucky shirt.
14. I sent condolence to my colleague. My colleague's mom had passed away.
15. Michael came to town. Michael used to be my roommate in college.
16. All the rioters had been arrested. The rioters had stormed the Capitol
17. All the rioters had been arrested. The police had identified the rioters.
18. Her phone was stolen. She recently bought the phone.
19. My daughter finally met the tennis star. My daughter idolized the tennis star.
20. Tell me about the customer from hell. The customer threw a tantrum at the restaurant.

Answers:

1. His friends, who just arrived, gave him a lift.
2. This is the friend who I told you about.
3. This was the event that started the riot.
4. These were the soldiers who defended the city.
5. These were the soldiers whose duty is to defend the city.
6. They found the treasure that belonged to Black Beard.
7. I visited India, which is the birthplace of my wife.
8. He has proof that shows his ownership.
9. She likes the attentions that he showers her with.
10. He bought her the purse which she has been eyeing.
11. She finally met the man whom her dad would approve.

12. She finally met the man about whom her dad was telling her.
13. He wears the lucky shirt, which she had picked out, to the interview.
14. I sent condolence to my colleague whose mom had passed away.
15. Michael, who used to be my roommate in college, came to town.
16. All the rioters, who had stormed the Capitol, had been arrested.
17. All the rioters, whom the police had identified, had been arrested.
18. Her phone, which recently bought, was stolen.
19. My daughter finally met the tennis star whom she idolized.
20. Tell me about the customer from hell who threw a tantrum at the restaurant.

NOTICE:

If the relative pronoun is the object of the relative clause, it can be left out. The following alternative answers are also correct.

2. This is the friend I told you about.
6. They found the treasure belonged to Black Beard.
9. She likes the attentions he showers her with.
10. He bought her the purse she has been eyeing.
11. She finally met the man her dad would approve.
12. She finally met the man her dad was telling her about.
13. He wears the lucky shirt she had picked out to the interview.
17. All the rioters the police had identified had been arrested.
18. Her recently bought phone was stolen.
19. My daughter finally met the tennis star she idolized.

3. Quantifiers with non-defining relative clauses

In non-defining relative clauses, quantifiers can be added (quantifier + of + relative pronoun) to say how many people or things the relative clause refers to.

He took many great pictures, **some of which** are stunning.

She wrote seven novels, **all of which** became classic.

They raised four kids, **all of whom** went to colleges.

Thousands of soldiers, **many of whom** are inexperienced, perished in that battle.

Sixteen mountaineers started the climb, only **two of whom** made it to the top.

He was given three choices, **none of which** were easy.

His parents, **both of whom** were refugees, became citizens yesterday.