

# RELATIVE PRONOUNS

## General

1. Relative pronouns do two jobs at once:
  - a) acting as subject or object of a verb
  - b) joining two clauses together
2. The most common are: *who*, *whom*, *which* and *that* — *who* and *whom* for people and *which* for things.
3. *Whom* is not used much in conversation and refers to an object of a verb or a preposition.
4. *That* can often replace *whom*, *who* and *which*. (not in No-defining)
5. After nouns referring to times and places, *when* and *where* can be used to mean at which or *in which* and *why* can be used to mean *for which*.
6. *Whose* is a possessive relative word, referring to people and things.

## Particular

### 1. Defining and non-defining relative clauses

#### Non-defining relative clauses

##### Use

We use non-defining relative clauses to give extra information about the person or thing in the main clause. The extra information is not essential.

*Robbie Williams' Millennium, which is one of his most successful singles, was released in 1999.*

##### Form

In non-defining relative clauses we put a comma before and after the main clause. We use the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, *whose*, *where* and *when* in non-defining relative clauses. The relative pronoun cannot be omitted.

*Mark Smith, who lives next door to us, plays in a band.*

#### Defining relative clauses

##### Use

We use defining relative clauses to give essential information about the person or thing in the main clause. It tells us which person or thing we are talking about.

*This is the CD which everyone is talking about.*

##### Form

There are no commas in defining relative clauses. We can replace *who* or *which* with *that* in defining relative clauses.

*She's the woman that works with my mother.*

*This is the book that I told you about.*

*Who*, *which*, *that* and *when* can be omitted when they are the object of the verb in the second clause, e.g. *There's the man that the police have been looking for.*

*Whose* and *where* can't be omitted.

Compare:

"George, *who* lives next door, always watches television."

"George, ~~*that*~~ lives next door, always watches television."

**NON-DEFINING** Extra info (that can't be used as relative)

"The couple *who* live next door always watch television.»

"The couple *that* live next door always watch television.»

**DEFINING** Essential info (that can be used as relative)

## 2. ***That***

- a) For people (WHO) and things (WHICH) and in conversation.
  - b) After the following: all, everything, something, anything, nothing, none, little, few, much.
  - c) After superlatives.
3. In defining relative clauses the relative pronoun is often left out if it is the object of the verb.
  4. Prepositions can come before the relative pronoun or at the end of the clause but you cannot use *that* or *who* after a preposition.
  5. In a non-defining relative clause *that* cannot be used.
  6. In defining clauses we can omit the relative when it is the object of the following verb but we can't omit the relative when it is the subject of the following verb:

The man that I phoned spoke Spanish ✓

The man I phoned spoke Spanish ✓

The man that phoned me spoke Spanish ✓

The man phoned me spoke Spanish X

## 7. **Sentence Relative**

Compare:

"He showed me a photo *that* upset me."

"He tore up the photo, *which* upset me."

8. Relative and infinitive  
"He was unhappy unless he had someone with *whom* to argue."
9. *Whose* can refer to people or things and can be the subject of a clause, the object of a verb or the object of a preposition.
10. Instead of *whose*, *of which* can be used.
11. ***What***  
Compare:  
"I gave her the money *that* she needed."  
"I gave her *what* she wanted."

