RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative Pronouns introduce relative clauses. Relative clauses are of two kinds: *Defining* and *Non-defining*.

**Defining Relative Clauses**

These describe the preceding noun in such a way as to distinguish it from other nouns of the same class. A clause of this kind is essential to the clear understanding of the noun:

- The man *who told me this* refused to give his name.

*Who told me this* is the relative clause. If we omit this, it is not clear what man we are talking about. Notice that there is no comma between a noun and the defining relative clause:

- The noise *that he made* woke everybody up.

**Relative Pronouns used in Defining Relative Clauses**

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**Use for persons:** *who* or *that*. *Who* is normally used as a subject.

- The man *who robbed you* is called Sykes.

- *That* is much less usual than *who* as a subject except after superlatives and after: *all, nobody, no one, someone, somebody, anybody*, etc., when either *who* or *that* can be used:

  - *All who / that* heard him were delighted with him.

  As an object: *whom, who* or *that*. The technically correct form is *whom*, but this is considered very formal and seldom used in spoken English. Instead we use *who or that* (*that* being more usual than *who*) and it is still more common to omit the relative pronoun all together.

- The man *whom* I saw was called Smith.
- The man *who* I saw was called Smith.
- The man *that* I saw …
- The man I saw … (relative pronoun omitted)

  With a preposition: *whom or that*. It is more usual to move the preposition to the end of the clause but it is still more common to omit the relative altogether.

- The man *who(m)* I bought it *from* told me to oil it.
The man *that* I bought it *from* told me to oil it.
The man I bought *it from* told me to oil it.

Possessive: *whose* is the only possible form:

People *whose* rents have been raised can appeal.

**Use for things:**
Subject: *which* or *that*.

This is the picture *which / that* caused such a sensation.

Object: *which* or *that* or no relative at all.

The car *which / that* I hired broke down after five minutes.
The car I hired broke …

*Which* is hardly ever used after *all, much, little, everything, none, no* and compounds of *no*, or after superlatives. Instead we use *that*, or omit the relative altogether, if it is a Direct Object.

All the apples *that* fall are eaten by pigs.
This is the best hotel (*that*) I know.

With a preposition: *which* or *that* or no relative (the same as for persons).

The relative pronoun *what*.

**What**: the thing that / the things that, tec.

The things that we saw astonished us = *What* we saw astonished us.

**Non-Defining Relative Clauses.**
They are placed after nouns which are definite already. They do not therefore define the noun, but merely add something to it giving some more information about it. They are not essential in the sentences and can be omitted without causing confusion. They are separated from their noun by commas.

Relative Pronouns

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**Use for persons:**
Subject: *who*
Only *who* can be used. Note the commas:

My gardener, *who* is very pessimistic, says that there will be no apples this year.
Object: whom, who
It must always be used and cannot be omitted: whom is the correct form though who is sometimes used in conversation:

She introduced me to her husband, whom I hadn’t seen before.

Object with preposition: whom
Mary, with whom I drove home, has a Rolls Royce.
Mary, who(m) I drove home with, has a Rolls Royce. (more common in conversation)

Possessive: whose
Chopin, whose works are world famous, composed some of his music here.

Use for things
Subject: which
His new house, which is absolutely enormous, has no running water.

Object: which
It cannot be omitted.
Julius Caesar, which you are going to see tomorrow, was written by Shakespeare.

With a preposition: which
This sherry, for which I paid one pound fifty, is awful.
This sherry, which I paid one pound fifty for, is awful. (more common in conversation)

Possessive: whose or of which
Whose can be used, especially for animals, and of which for things.

My dog, whose temper is very uncertain, often bites the judges at dog shows.
His thesis, of which the last hundred pages are nonsense, will probably win him a lot of notoriety.

The connective relatives are who and which
I met Mary. She gave me this.
I met Mary who gave me this.

I bought this map. It helped me a lot.
I bought this map which helped me a lot.

Which can refer to a whole clause:
He said that he had never been here before, which was not true.

Commas are used with connective relatives.
What cannot be used as a connective relative, and neither can that.

Relative adverbs
The relative adverbs when, where and why are used to replace a preposition + the relative pronoun which.
When replaces in / on which, used for time.
Where replaces in which or at which, used for place.
Why replaces for which, used for reasons.

The year in which he died = the year when he died.
The day on which she arrived = the day when she arrived.
The house in which he lived = the house where he lived.

Findland, where he spends his holidays, has lots of lakes.
The reason why he came is not very convincing.

EXERCISES
I. Join the following sentences using relatives.
1. She's a nice old lady. Her parents were born in New York.
2. Did you pick up the keys? They were on the table.
3. A man brought in a small girl. Her hand had been cut by flying glass.
4. Cathy Freeman was an aborigine athlete. She lit the Olympic flame in Sydney.
5. Mayka is a Spanish woman. Her husband is Egyptian.
6. Iván is a boy. I go out with Iván.
7. She slept in a hotel. It was very comfortable.
8. Tom had been driving all day. He was tired and wanted to stop.

II. Choose the most appropriate relative pronoun. Use that only if necessary.
1. John, ________ is my younger brother, went to do the shopping.
2. His work, ________ is very difficult, exhausted him.
3. Tom, ________ mother is French, speaks the language very well.
4. Mr Smith, ________ I was talking to, is a carpenter.
5. Your problem, ________ I have thought about a lot, is a difficult one.
6. Our friends, ________ advice we sought, were very helpful.
7. It was there that he met Mary ________ is now his wife.
8. The treaty, ________ was signed yesterday, is an excellent one.
9. His father, ________ works very hard, has just bought this house.
10. Yesterday I met Harry, ________ works nearby.

III. Combine the sentences using a relative clause. Use relative pronouns only where necessary. Note that you have to use commas in some of the sentences.
1. We spent our holiday in Scotland last year. Scotland is in the north of Great Britain.
   Last year we spent our holidays in Scotland, which is in the north of Great Britain.
2. People live in Scotland. They are called Scots.
3. We first went to Edinburgh. Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland. We first ____________________

4. Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh. He wrote the Sherlock Holmes stories. Arthur Conan Doyle ____________________

5. Then we visited a lake. It is in the Highlands. The lake ____________________

6. Loch Ness is 37 km long. People know it for its friendly monster. Loch Ness ____________________

7. There we met an old man. He told us that he had seen Nessie. An old man ____________________

8. We then travelled to a mountain. The mountain is near the town of Fort William. We then ____________________

9. The mountain is the highest mountain in Great Britain. It is called Ben Nevis. The mountain ____________________

10. I sent you a postcard. It was written on the summit of Ben Nevis. The postcard ____________________

IV. Combine the following pairs or groups of sentences by means of relative pronouns, making any necessary changes.
1. His girlfriend turned out to be an enemy spy. He trusted her absolutely. ________________________________________________________________

2. We’ll have to walk across the frontier. This will be difficult. ________________________________________________________________

3. We lit a fire. It soon dried out our clothes. ________________________________________________________________

4. I played with a girl. She was very nice. ________________________________________________________________

5. I’ve got a friend. Her mother is in hospital. ________________________________________________________________

6. A vegetarian is a person. This person doesn’t eat meat. ________________________________________________________________

V. Complete the sentences using the information in brackets.
1. (we met some people) The people we met were very nice. The people ________________________________________________________________

2. (I’m wearing shoes) The shoes are not very comfortable. The shoes ________________________________________________________________

3. (you’re reading a book) What’s the name? The book ________________________________________________________________

4. (I wrote a letter to her) She didn’t get the letter I wrote. The letter ________________________________________________________________

5. (they gave me an umbrella) I’ve lost the umbrella. The umbrella ________________________________________________________________

6. (they invited some people to dinner) The people didn’t come. The people ________________________________________________________________

VI. Combine the following pairs or groups of sentences, using relative pronouns.
9. My grandmother is 90 years old. She has never been ill. ________________________________________________________________

10. The Earth is a planet. It moves round the sun. ________________________________________________________________
11. This is the place. We should build our house here.

12. Mary loves studying. She is my younger sister.

13. I work for a firm. This firm makes cars.


15. A grocer's is a shop. You can buy fruit there.

16. In February we’ll be very busy. It’s the shortest month.

VII. Join these sentences with who, whose, which or where.
1. Yesterday I met Robbie James. Robbie James is the drummer in a new pop group called 'Street Level'.
   Yesterday I met Robbie James, who is the drummer in a new pop group called 'Street Level'.
2. The house has been for sale since last February. The house is very expensive.
3. Susan Rose has just won £100,000. Susan Rose's brother Paul works in my office.
4. I went to Munich. I had always wanted to visit Munich.
5. A cup is an object. We drink out of it.
6. Mrs Greeman's dog is mad. It bit a young girl yesterday.
7. They rowed across the Atlantic. This had never been done before.
8. The doctor came by. We didn’t know him.

VIII. Combine the following pairs or groups of sentences, using relative pronouns.
1. She was dancing with a student. He had a slight limp.
2. Mike speaks French very well. Mike's mother comes from Paris.
3. Last summer we went to Whitby. We stayed at The Queen's Hotel in Whitby.
4. My uncle Peter is coming to see me next week. My uncle Peter lives in Scotland.
5. I am looking after some children. They are terribly spoilt.