

## Unit 8: RELATIVE CLAUSES

We can use relative clauses to join two English sentences, or to give more information about something.

- I bought a new car. It is very fast.  
I bought a new car that is very fast.
- She lives in New York. She likes living in New York.  
She lives in New York, which she likes.

### TYPES OF CLAUSES

A defining relative clause tells which noun we are talking about:

- I like the woman who lives next door.  
(If I don't say 'who lives next door', then we don't know which woman I mean).

A non-defining relative clause gives us extra information about something. We don't need this information to understand the sentence.

- I live in London, which has some fantastic parks.  
(Everybody knows where London is, so 'which has some fantastic parks' is extra information).

### DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

First, let's consider when the relative pronoun is the subject of a defining relative clause. We can use *who*, *which* or *that*. We use *who* for people and *which* for things. We can use *that* for people or things.

The relative clause can come after the subject or the object of the sentence. We can't drop the relative pronoun.

- I'm looking for a secretary who / that can use a computer well.
- She has a son who / that is a doctor.
- The people who / that live on the island are very friendly.
- The man who / that phoned is my brother.

The relative pronoun can also be the object of the clause. In this case we can drop the relative pronoun if we want to. Again, the clause can come after the subject or the object of the sentence.

- She loves the chocolate (which / that) I bought.
- John met a woman (who / that) I had been to school with.
- The police arrested a man (who / that) Jill worked with.
- The bike (which / that) I loved was stolen.
- The university (which / that) she likes is famous.

When using defining relative clauses, you mustn't use commas between clauses.

## NON-DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

We don't use *that* in non-defining relative clauses, so we need to use *which* if the pronoun refers to a thing, and *who* if it refers to a person. We can't drop the relative pronoun in this kind of clause, even if the relative pronoun is the object of the clause.

- My boss, who is very nice, lives in Manchester.
- My sister, who I live with, knows a lot about cars.
- Yesterday I called our friend Julie, who lives in New York.
- The photographer called to the Queen, who looked annoyed.

Commas must always be used in non-defining relative clauses.

## PREPOSITIONS AND RELATIVE CLAUSES

If the verb in the relative clause needs a preposition, we put it at the end of the clause:

### listen to

- The music is good. Julie listens to the music.
- The music (which / that) Julie listens to is good.

### work with

- My brother met a woman. I used to work with the woman.
- My brother met a woman (who / that) I used to work with.

### go to

- The country is very hot. He went to the country.
- The country (which / that) he went to is very hot.

### come from

- I visited the city. John comes from the city.
- I visited the city (that / which) John comes from.

### apply for

- The job is well paid. She applied for the job.
- The job (which / that) she applied for is well paid.

## WHOSE

*Whose* is always the subject of the relative clause and can't be left out. It replaces a possessive. It can be used for people and things.

- The dog is over there. The dog's / its owner lives next door.  
The dog whose owner lives next door is over there.
- The little girl is sad. The little girl's / her doll was lost.  
The little girl whose doll was lost is sad.

## WHERE / WHEN / WHY

We can sometimes use these question words instead of relative pronouns and prepositions.

I live in a city. I study in the city.

- I live in the city where I study.
- I live in the city that / which I study in.
- I live in the city in which I study.

## PARTICIPLE CLAUSES

Participle clauses enable us to say information in a more economical way. They are formed using present participles (going, reading, seeing, walking, etc.), past participles (gone, read, seen, walked, etc.) or perfect participles (having gone, having read, having seen, having walked, etc.).

We can use participle clauses when the participle and the verb in the main clause have the same subject.

- Waiting for Ellie, I made some tea.  
(While I was waiting for Ellie, I made some tea.)

Participle clauses do not have a specific tense. The tense is indicated by the verb in the main clause.

### Present participle clauses

Here are some common ways we use present participle clauses. Note that present participles have a similar meaning to active verbs.

- To give the result of an action  
The bomb exploded, destroying the building.
- To give the reason for an action  
Knowing she loved reading, Richard bought her a book.
- To talk about an action that happened at the same time as another action  
Standing in the queue, I realised I didn't have any money.
- To add information about the subject of the main clause  
Starting in the new year, the new policy bans cars in the city centre.

## Past participle clauses

Here are some common ways that we use past participle clauses. Note that past participles normally have a passive meaning.

- With a similar meaning to an if condition  
Used in this way, participles can make your writing more concise. (If you use participles in this way, ... )
- To give the reason for an action  
Worried by the news, she called the hospital.
- To add information about the subject of the main clause  
Filled with pride, he walked towards the stage.

### Perfect participle clauses

Perfect participle clauses show that the action they describe was finished before the action in the main clause. Perfect participles can be structured to make an active or passive meaning.

- Having got dressed, he slowly went downstairs.
- Having finished their training, they will be fully qualified doctors.
- Having been made redundant, she started looking for a new job.

### Participle clauses after conjunctions and prepositions

It is also common for participle clauses, especially with -ing, to follow conjunctions and prepositions such as before, after, instead of, on, since, when, while and in spite of.

- Before cooking, you should wash your hands.
- Instead of complaining about it, they should try doing something positive.