



RELATIVE CLAUSES

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Relative clauses are sentences that tell us more about people or things. We use relative pronouns to introduce them.

We use:

- who and whom for people
- which for things
- that for people or things

There are two types, defining and non-defining relative clauses.

The pronouns **who**, **whom** and **which** are often replaced by **that** in spoken English (only in defining relative clauses). **Whom** is very formal and is mostly used in written English.

SUBJECT AND OBJECT PRONOUNS

Subject and object pronouns cannot be distinguished by their forms - who, which, that are used for subject and object pronouns. You can, however, distinguish them as follows:

- If the relative pronoun is followed by a verb, the relative pronoun is a **subject pronoun**. Subject pronouns must always be used.
 - Can you bring me the apple **which** is lying on the table?
- If the relative pronoun is not followed by a verb (but by a noun or pronoun), the relative pronoun is an **object pronoun**. Object pronouns can be dropped in defining relative clauses, which are then called *Contact Clauses*.
 - Can you bring me the apple (**which**) George lay on the table?



DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

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We can use defining relative clauses to **make clear which person or thing** we are talking about.

- *Marie Curie is the woman **who discovered radium**.*
- *This is the house **which Jack built**.*

If you remove the relative clause, then the meaning is unclear. This is why defining relative clauses are also called identifying or restrictive relative clauses.

Who or which can be replaced by that in defining relative clauses.

- *Marie Curie is the woman **that discovered radium**.*
- *This is the house **that Jack built**.*

DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

The relative pronoun is the subject/object of the relative clause, so we **do not repeat** the subject/object:

- *Marie Curie is the woman **who** ~~she~~ discovered radium.*
(*who* is the subject of *discovered*, so we don't need *she*)
- *This is the house **that** Jack built ~~it~~.*
(*that* is the object of *built*, so we don't need *it*)

We can **leave out** the pronoun **if it is the object** of the relative clause:

- *This is the house ~~that~~ Jack built.* (*that* is the object of *built*)

In defining relative clauses, we never use commas (,) to separate the clauses.



NON-DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

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We also use relative clauses to **give more information** about a person, thing or situation:

- *Lord Thompson, **who is 76**, has just retired.*
- *We had fish and chips, **which I always enjoy**.*
- *I met Rebecca in town yesterday, **which was a nice surprise**.*

With this kind of relative clause, we use commas (,) to separate it from the rest of the sentence. They are also called non-identifying or non-restrictive relative clauses.

In this kind of relative clause, we **cannot** use **that** and we **cannot** leave out the pronoun:

- *Lord Thompson, **who is 76**, has just retired.*
(NOT ~~*Lord Thompson, **that is 76**, has just retired.*~~)
- *We had fish and chips, **which I always enjoy**.*
(NOT ~~*We had fish and chips, **I always enjoy**.*~~)



PARTICIPLE CLAUSES

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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.*)

PRESENT PARTICIPLE CLAUSES

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

- 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.*

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*.

PAST PARTICIPLE CLAUSES

Note that past participles normally have a passive meaning. We can use past participle clauses:

- 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.



EXERCISES

For more information:

- <https://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar/relative-clauses>
- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference/relative-pronouns-and-relative-clauses>
- <https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/relative-clauses.html>