GRAMMARTOP
ENGLISH GRAMMAR IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Table Of Contents:

Relative clauses give us *more information* about something or someone in a sentence. They are not grammatically essential in a sentence. They may add meaning, but if they are removed, the sentence will still function grammatically.

Relative clauses start with **relative pronouns and adverbs**, which are used to define or refer back to the noun that precedes them.

The relative pronouns are *'who', 'that', 'which', 'whose'*, and *'whom'*. The relative adverbs are *'when'* and *'where'*. We use *'whom'* when it does not refer to the subject of the sentence but the object.

There are **two types** of **relative clause**:

1. Defining
2. Non-defining

Defining relative clauses

Defining relative clauses tell us the *specific thing* or *person* we are talking about in a sentence. Defining clauses are *not separated by commas* or brackets. Defining clauses provide important information about the noun we are talking about. The sentence's meaning changes greatly if we remove a defining relative clause.

- *The girl **who** invited me is not here yet.*
- *The shoes **that** I bought were really expensive.*
- *This is the woman **whose** dog saved me.*

Non-defining relative clauses

A non-defining clause provides *more information about the noun* we are talking about in

the sentence. Unlike defining relative clauses, non-defining clauses *are separated by commas or brackets*. Non-defining clauses can be removed from a sentence without affecting the meaning because they simply give us extra details.

- *My grandmother, **who** is 90 years old, lives alone in the countryside.*
- *My new car, **which** I bought myself, is compact and good on gas.*
- *Jucinda, **whom** I just met, is coming to our house for dinner.*

Referring to people

We use '*who*', '*whom*', '*that*', and '*whose*' to refer to people. We can not use that in non-defining clauses.

- *Do you remember that girl **that** I went to university with?*
- *Do you know that girl **who** just started this class?*
- *Do you remember Kylie, **whose** mother used to babysit me?*
- *The little boy, **whom** I thought was homeless, is back again.*

Referring to things

We use '*which*', '*that*', and '*whose*' to refer to things:

- *Can I have the book **that** I lent to you?*
- *The heavy wind, **which** is not normal for this time of year, caused damage to our house.*
- *I told you about this company, **whose** CEO personally wrote me a letter, the other day.*

Referring to time and place

We use '*when*' and '*where*' to refer to time and place nouns:

- *It was just one of those days **when** everything goes wrong.*
- *I am so excited to visit Germany, **where** Einstein was born, and Austria on our trip in the spring.*

This video from explains what relative clauses and pronouns are:

See also:

[Interrogative Pronouns (Question Words)](link)