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**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 \(Question Words\)](#)