



RELATIVE CLAUSES

Function: When do we use relative clauses?

We use relative clauses to give more information about a person, place, object, situation, etc. There are two types – defining and non-defining relative clauses.



Match them to the pictures.



Look at these sentences. They have the same relative clause: '**which was red**'. In the first sentence with the comma, the relative clause isn't necessary to understand which t-shirt the girl is talking about – it's just extra information. In the second sentence without the comma, the relative clause is necessary in order to define which t-shirt the girl bought.

1. I bought the cheapest t-shirt, **which was red**.

2. I bought the cheapest t-shirt **which was red**.

Function: When do we use relative clauses?

Defining relative clauses: Information which is necessary to define which object, person, place, etc. we are talking about.



Here, the relative clause, *which was red*, **is necessary**. She didn't buy the cheapest t-shirt (the purple one). She bought the cheapest red t-shirt.



I bought the cheapest t-shirt **which was red**.

Defining relative clauses have **NO** comma. Non-defining relative clauses have a comma.

Non-defining relative clauses: Information which isn't necessary to define which object, person, etc. we are talking about. It's just extra information.



I bought the cheapest t-shirt, **which was red**.

Here, the relative clause, *which was red*, **isn't necessary**. We know that she bought the cheapest t-shirt. The fact it is red is just extra information.

Function: What about relative pronouns?

Relative pronouns connect the relative clause to the rest of the sentence. We use different relative pronouns depending what we are describing.



Look at the examples and complete the table with one of the relative pronouns in bold.

people	who
things/animals	which
places	where
times	when
possessions	whose

It's the restaurant **where** I had my birthday party.

He's the boy **who** I walk to school with.

It's the dog **whose** owner is sitting over there.

I'll always remember the day **when** I broke my arm skiing.

I read a wonderful book **which** was set in New York.



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In **defining relative clauses**, we can also use **that** instead of *who* or *which*. We cannot use *that* after a comma with **non-defining relative clauses**.

Omitting relative pronouns

In **defining relative clauses** (never with non-defining) we can omit the relative pronouns *who*, *which* or *that* but not when the verb comes immediately after those words.

- The dog **that** **Mary** **is looking** after can be dangerous. ✓
Subject + verb.
- The dog **Mary** **is looking** after can be dangerous. ✓
- He's the boy **who** **I** **walk** to school with. ✓
- He's the boy **I** **walk** to school with. ✓

Omitting relative pronouns

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- I read a book **which** **was set** in NYC. ✓
verb.

(Relative Pronoun cannot be omitted)

- I read a book **was set** in NYC. ✗