

Help box

Relative clauses

When a sentence has two clauses, the second clause often gives us more information about someone or something in the first, or main, clause. Second clauses often begin with **which**, **that**, or **who**, and are called **relative clauses**.

❖ We use the relative pronoun **who** or **that** to refer to a person.

E.g. ...to create a more even playing field for those **who** experience difficulties with reading...

❖ We use the relative pronoun **which** or **that** to refer to a thing not a person.

E.g. ... software, and peripherals **that** assist people with disabilities in accessing ...

❖ We use **that** after indefinites (something, all, etc...).

E.g. Security is *something* **that** worries me.

❖ We use **whose** to talk about possession.

E.g. This is my friend **whose** PC broke down last week.

❖ Relative pronouns can be left out when they are the object (1) and NOT the subject (2) of the relative clause.

E.g.1.... and perform tasks **that** they would have difficulty with due to their disability.

E.g.2 ... digital interfaces using keyboard shortcuts, **which** offer an auditory representation ...

❖ **Relative adverbs**

The relative pronoun can be replaced by relative adverbs of **place** and **time**.

E.g. ...and other areas of life **where** they might face challenges. (=at which___)

E.g. I'll never forget the day **when** I visited Silicon Valley. (≡___on which....)

❖ **Defining and Non-defining relative clauses**

1 Defining relative clauses: give essential information to understand the sentence. We need the relative to understand the sentence.

E.g. Screen readers are specialised software applications **which transform digital text into synthesized speech**.

2 Non-defining relative clauses: give EXTRA information. If we remove the relative clause, the sentence still makes sense.

E.g. ...OCR software can transform it into digital text, **which can then be read aloud...**

Note: We always use a relative pronoun or adverb to start a non-defining relative clause: *who*, *which*, *whose*, *when* or *where* (but not *that*). We also use commas to separate the clause from the rest of the sentence.

❖ **Reduced relative clauses**

Reduced relative clauses modify the subject and **not** the object of a sentence.

We use a present participle instead of an active verb and a past participle instead of a passive verb.

1 ... by blocking out or shading parts of the screen, **allowing** the user to focus on a specific section...

2 There is a wide variety of assistive technologies **used** to improve a user's ability to read...