### 10- [Relative Pronouns](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Relative-Pronouns.htm)

A **relative pronoun** is a type of pronoun used to connect a [**relative clause**](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Relative-Clauses.htm) (also known as an **adjective clause**) to the main clause in a sentence. Relative clauses either help clarify who or what a sentence is talking about (known as the **antecedent**), or else give extra information about it.

The five most commonly used relative pronouns:

**That, which, who, whom, whose**

* The book **that** you lent me is very interesting.
* My classmate, **who** has been absent for a month because of sickness, has finally returned to class.
* Our neighbours **whose** cat is lost, have decided to look for it.
* I watched the movie **which** you told me about.
* She’s the kind of person **whom** others consider shy.

Other examples:

* Let's do something that is fun.
* Toronto, which is the largest city in Canada, is a beautiful place.
* Hassina is a woman whom I respect.
* The house that we bought is in the suburbs.
* Frank, who is an introvert, spends a lot of time alone

Other (less commonly used) relative pronouns include the following:

**Where, when, whoever, whosoever, whomever, whichever, wherever, whatever, whatsoever**

NOTE:

A relative pronoun generally introduces a relative clause (also called an adjective clause)

An adjective clause is a dependent clause. It modifies a noun or a pronoun in a main clause:

• Frank, who is an introvert, spends a lot of time alone.

• Let's do something that is fun.

An adjective clause often begins with a relative pronoun: *who, whom, which,* or *that.* It can also begin with *whose, when,* or *when.* The word that begins an adjective clause usually comes directly after the noun or pronoun that the clause modifies.

•Toronto, which is the largest city in Canada, is a beautiful place.

## Functions of the relative pronoun

### Subjects, objects, and possession

In a relative clause, the relative pronoun functions in one of three ways: as [*the subject*](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/The-Subject.htm), the [*object*](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Objects.htm), or a **possessive pronoun** (though *whose* is the only possessive relative pronoun). The usage of a relative pronoun ultimately depends on its antecedent and the relative clause it introduces.

We can use this table as a quick guide to the functions of relative pronouns:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Antecedent** | **Subject** | **Object** | **Possessive** |
| **People** | Who | Who / Whom | Whose |
| **Things** | Which | Which | Whose |
| **People *or* Things** | That | That |  |

Now let’s look at how each of these can be used in a sentence.

#### Subject

* “The woman ***who*** *came to my house* was a salesperson.” (*Who* is the **subject** of the relative clause *who came to my house*, which describes the antecedent *the woman*.)
* “The students kept on talking loudly, ***which*** *angered the librarian*.” (*Which* is the subject of the non-restrictive relative clause *which angered the librarian* that describes the antecedent *kept on talking loudly*.)
* “I have to go clean the garden ***that*** *is full of dead leaves*.” (*That* is the subject of the restrictive relative clause *that is full of dead leaves*, describing the antecedent *the garden*.)
* “I want a smartphone ***which*** *can download a lot of apps*.” (*Which* is the subject of the relative clause *which can download a lot of apps* and describes the antecedent *a smartphone*.)

#### Object

* “I don’t know if I passed the test ***that*** *I took yesterday*.” (*That* is the object of relative clause *that I took yesterday* and describes the antecedent *the test*.)
* “The new employee ***whom*** *I hired* is a dedicated worker.” (*Whom* is the object of the relative clause *whom I hired* and describes the antecedent *the new employee*.)

#### Possession

The relative pronoun *whose* is unique in that it is the only one that can describe possession. It comes before a noun in a sentence, modifying it like an adjective to indicate that it belongs to the antecedent.

* “She tried to help the student ***whose*** *lunch money had been stolen*.” (*Whose* modifies *lunch money* and introduces the relative clause *whose lunch money had been stolen*, which describes the antecedent *the student*.)
* The teacher has given his pen to the pupil **whose** pencil case was lost.
* **Substituting relative pronouns**

Most relative pronouns can be used in place of one another in certain circumstances. The table below gives a quick breakdown of when it is acceptable to use each relative pronoun:

### Relative pronouns that can be replaced

* “The woman **who/that** came to my house was a salesperson.” (*Who* and *that* are interchangeable when describing people.)
* “The new employee **whom/who/that\*** I hired is a dedicated worker.” (In addition to *whom*, *who* and *that* can also be used as an object in informal English when describing a person in a **restrictive** relative clause.)
* “Our teacher, **whom/who\*** my father knew in high school, has been elected head of the department.” (When **whom** is the object of a **non-restrictive** relative clause, it can only be replaced by *who*)
* “I want a smartphone **that/which\*\*** can download a lot of apps.” (*Which* and *that* can both describe things.)

### Relative pronouns that cannot be replaced

* “The students kept on talking loudly, ***which*** *angered the librarian*.”.” (Since *which* is the subject of a **non-restrictive** relative clause describing a thing (the act of talking loudly), it cannot be replaced by any other relative pronoun.)
* “She tried to help the student **whose** lunch money had been stolen.” (Only *whose* can be used as a possessive relative pronoun, whether it describes a person or a thing.)

## Omitting relative pronouns

Sometimes, especially in informal writing, relative pronouns can be omitted altogether. This can only be done when the relative pronoun is the object of a restrictive relative clause.

For example, if a relative pronoun is the object of a clause, there are several ways you can phrase the sentence, depending on how formal or informal you want it to sound:

* “The girl *to* ***whom*** *I gave my ice cream* looked up and smiled at me.” (very formal)
* “The girl ***whom*** *I gave my ice cream to* looked up and smiled at me.” (formal)
* “The girl ***who*** *I gave my ice cream to* looked up and smiled at me.” (casual)
* “The girl ***that*** *I gave my ice cream to* looked up and smiled at me.” (very casual)
* “The girl *I gave my ice cream to* looked up and smiled at me.” (most casual)

Unlike *whom*, which can only act as an object of a relative clause, *who* and *that* can function as both objects **and** subjects when describing people; therefore, in relative clauses, it is acceptable to replace the rather formal-sounding *whom* with either *who* or *that*, or omit the relative pronoun altogether.

When describing things instead of people, the relative pronouns *that* and *which* may be omitted as long as they are used, like *whom*, as an object of a restrictive relative clause:

* “The house ***that*** *I want to buy* is going on sale today.”
* “The house ***which*** *I want to buy* is going on sale today.”
* “The house *I want to buy* is going on sale today.”

Similarly, if a relative clause uses an [**auxiliary verb**](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Auxiliary-Verbs.htm) (such as *to be*) + a [**present participle**](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Participles.htm)after the relative pronoun, it can be worded like this:

* “The man ***who is*** *speaking in this video* is a world-famous scientist.”
* “The man ***that is*** *speaking in this video* is a world-famous scientist.”
* “The man *speaking in this video* is a world-famous scientist.”

### Relative pronouns as objects of prepositions

In certain cases, relative pronouns can be used as objects of prepositions, meaning the relative pronoun works in conjunction with a [**preposition**](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/Prepositions.htm) to modify the subject or verb of the relative clause. Only *whose, which*, and *whom* can function as objects of prepositions.

In more formal English, we place a preposition before the pronoun. Here are some of the combinations you might see:

* with **whom**
* to **whom**
* for **whom**
* through **which**
* of **which**
* about **which**
* from **which**
* at **whose**
* in **whose**
* with **whose**

In modern English, positioning prepositions in front of relative pronouns often sounds overly formal, especially when it comes to the relative pronoun *whom*. As a result, it is generally acceptable for a preposition to come after a relative clause instead of before a relative pronoun. For example:

* “The teacher ***with whom*** *I spoke* had many interesting things to say.” (Very formal)
* “The teacher ***whom/who/that*** *I spoke* ***with*** had many interesting things to say.” (Less formal. **Whom** is most often replaced by either **who** or **that**, and the preposition **with** is moved to the end of the relative clause.)
* “The teacher *I spoke* ***with*** had many interesting things to say.” (Most casual. The relative pronoun is omitted, and the preposition is kept at the end of the relative clause.)

It is also acceptable to place a preposition at the end of a relative clause when using the pronoun *which*:

* “The home ***in which*** *I grew up* holds many dear memories for me.” (Very formal. In this case, you cannot replace **which** with **that**, as **that** cannot be used as an object of a preposition.)
* “The home ***that/which*** *I grew up* ***in*** holds many dear memories for me.” (less formal)
* “The home *I grew up* ***in*** holds many dear memories for me.” (most casual)

The pronoun *whose* follows this same pattern of prepositional placement, except that it cannot be substituted with another pronoun and it cannot be omitted:

* “My friend, ***in whose*** *house I’m staying*, invited me to see a movie with him.” (very formal)
* “My friend, ***whose*** *house I’m staying* ***in***, invited me to see a movie with him.” (less formal)

## *When* and *Where*

*When* and *where* are also used as relative pronouns, especially in less formal writing and conversation. They are always used in **restrictive** relative clauses.

We use *when* to describe antecedents that have to do with time, as in:

* “That’s the day ***when*** *we met*.”
* “I’m looking forward to a time ***when*** *the world will be at peace*.”

We use *where* to describe antecedents that have to do with location, as in:

* “The café ***where*** *we went on Sunday* was very nice.”
* “The town ***where*** *she lives* is only an hour away.”

### Using prepositions for formal English

In more formal English, *where* and *when* are often replaced with a preposition + *which* to mark precise locations or points in time. For example:

* “We preferred a part of the country ***where*** *we could live in peace and quiet*.”
* “We preferred a part of the country ***in which*** *we could live in peace and quiet*.”
* “Ahmed is looking forward to the day ***when*** *he can finally find a job*.”
* “Ahmed is looking forward to the day ***on which*** *he can finally find a job*.”

# WHATEVER, WHOEVER, WHICHEVER, WHEREVER, WHENEVER

whatever » anything thatwhoever » anyone whowhichever » any ... whichwherever » at any placewhenever » at any time

You can do ***whatever*** you want to. ***Whoever*** leaves last should turn off the lights.Choose ***whichever pencil*** you like.***Wherever*** I looked there was something interesting to see.***Whenever*** I go abroad, I take as many pictures as possible.

It is possible to use what instead of whatever in the first sentence above, but it is not possible to use who instead of whoever in the second sentence:

You can do ***what*** you want to.***~~Who~~*** ~~leaves last should turn off the lights.~~