

Relative clauses 1: clauses with **who/that/which**

A

Look at this example sentence:

The woman **who lives next door** is a doctor.

relative clause

A *clause* is a part of a sentence. A *relative clause* tells us which person or thing (or what kind of person or thing) the speaker means:

- ☐ The woman **who lives next door** ... ('who lives next door' tells us which woman)
- ☐ People **who live in the country** ... ('who live in the country' tells us what kind of people)

We use **who** in a relative clause when we are talking about people (not things):

the woman – she lives next door – is a doctor

→ The woman **who lives next door** is a doctor.

we know a lot of people – they live in the country

→ We know a lot of people **who live in the country.**

- ☐ An architect is someone **who designs buildings**.
- ☐ What was the name of the person **who phoned**?
- ☐ Anyone **who wants to apply for the job** must do so by Friday.

You can also use **that** (instead of **who**), but you can't use **which** for people:

- ☐ The woman **that lives next door** is a doctor. (*not the woman which*)

Sometimes you must use **who** (*not that*) for people – see Unit 95.

B

When we are talking about things, we use **that** or **which** (*not who*) in a relative clause:

where is the cheese? – it was in the fridge

→ Where is the cheese **that** **which** was in the fridge?

- ☐ I don't like stories **that have unhappy endings**. (or stories **which** have ...)
- ☐ Grace works for a company **that makes furniture**. (or a company **which** makes furniture)
- ☐ The machine **that broke down** is working again now. (or The machine **which** broke down)

That is more usual than **which**, but sometimes you must use **which** – see Unit 95.

C

Remember that in relative clauses we use **who/that/which**, not **he/she/they/it**.

Compare:

- ☐ 'Who's that woman?' 'She lives next door to me.'
I've never spoken to the woman **who** lives next door. (*not the woman she lives*)
- ☐ Where is the cheese? **It** was in the fridge.
Where is the cheese **that** was in the fridge? (*not the cheese it was*)

D

What = 'the thing(s) that'. Compare **what** and **that**:

- ☐ **What happened** was my fault. (= the thing that happened)

but

- ☐ Everything **that happened** was my fault. (*not* Everything what happened)
- ☐ The machine **that broke down** is now working again. (*not* The machine what broke down)