

# Relative clauses (1) (The girl who I was talking about.)

A **relative clause** gives more information about someone or something referred to in a main clause. Some relative clauses (**defining relative clauses**) are used to specify *which* person or thing we mean, or which *type* of person or thing we mean:

- *The couple who live next to us* have sixteen grandchildren.
- Andrew stopped *the police car that was driving past*.

Notice that we don't put a comma between the noun and a defining relative clause. Relative clauses begin with a **relative pronoun**: a *wh*-word (**who**, **which**, etc.) or **that**. However, sometimes we omit the *wh*-word/ **that** and use a **zero relative pronoun** (see B below):

- We went to a *restaurant (which/that) Jane had recommended to us*.

We prefer to put a relative clause immediately after or as close as possible to the noun it adds information to:

- ! • The building for sale was **the house which had a slate roof** and was by the stream.  
 • (*rather than* The building for sale was the house by the stream which had a slate roof.)

B When we use a defining relative clause, the relative pronoun can be the subject or the object of the clause. In the following sentences the relative pronoun is the *subject*. Notice that the verb follows the relative pronoun:

- Rockall is an uninhabited *island which/that lies* north west of mainland Scotland.
- We have *a friend who/that plays* the piano.

In the following sentences the relative pronoun is the *object*. Notice that there is a noun (or pronoun) between the relative pronoun and the verb in the relative clause. In this case, we can use a **zero relative pronoun**:

- He showed me the *rocks (which/that) he had brought back* from Australia.
- That's *the man (who/that) I met* at Allison's party.

## Adding information about things

Relative pronoun	which	that	zero relative pronoun
subject	/	/	X
object	/	/	/

## Adding information about people

Relative pronoun	who	that	zero relative pronoun
subject	/	/	X
object	/	/	

We can also use **whom** instead of **who** as object, although **whom** is very formal:

- She's an actress **whom** most people think is at the peak of her career.

We use **that** as *subject* after **something** and **anything**; words such as **all**, **little**, **much**, and **none** used as nouns; and **superlatives**. (**Which** is also used as subject after **something** and **anything**, but less commonly.) We use **that** or **zero relative pronoun** as *object* after these:

- These walls are *all that remain* of the city. (*not ...all which remain...*)
- She's one of *the kindest* people (*that*) I know. (*not ...who I know.*)
- Is there *anything (that)* I can do to help? (*rather than ...anything which I can do...*)

C You can't add a subject or object to the relative clause in addition to the relative pronoun:

- ? • The man **who** gave me the book was the librarian. (*not The man who he gave me...*)

\*Notice also that adding a pronoun to the main clause in addition to the relative clause is unnecessary, although it is found in speech:

- A friend of mine **who** is a solicitor helped me. (*or, in speech* A friend of mine who is a solicitor - she helped me.)

**EXERCISES**

**70.1** Complete the sentences with the correct or most appropriate relative pronoun. Give alternatives if possible. (Use - to indicate zero relative pronoun.) (B)

- 1 The thought of going home to his family was all ..... kept him happy while he was working abroad.
- 2 She was probably the hardest working student ..... I've ever taught.
- 3 Lewis, the man ..... Johnson beat in the last World Championships, has broken the world record.
- 4 Lighting bonfires at this time of the year is a tradition ..... goes back to the 17th century.
- 5 Dorothy said something ..... I couldn't hear clearly.
- 6 There was little ..... we could do to help her.
- 7 The Royal Floridian is an express train ..... runs between New York and Miami.
- 8 The machine ..... I have to use in my job cost over a million pounds.
- 9 The diary ..... Ron kept when he was in prison was sold for \$50, 000.
- 10 I have a friend ..... ran in the New York Marathon last year.
- 11 We were told that we would be held responsible for anything ..... went wrong.
- 12 He's probably the best golfer ..... I've played against.

**70.2** Write the information in brackets as a relative clause in an appropriate place in the sentence. Give alternative relative pronouns if possible. (Use - to indicate zero relative pronoun.) (A & B)

- 1 Jane has now sold the old car. (she was given it by her parents) **Jane has** now sold the old car **which/that/-** she was **given** by Her parents.
- 2 The house is for sale. (it is next to ours)
- 3 Most of the forests have now been destroyed. (they once covered Britain)
- 4 He took me to see the old farmhouse. (he is rebuilding it)
- 5 There have been complaints about the noise from people. (they live in the flats)
- 6 A doctor has had to retire through ill health. (we know him)

**70.3** Correct these sentences or put a ✓. (A-C)

- 1 My brother who is in the army he came to see us.
- 2 A small amount of money was all which was taken in the robbery.
- 3 The path was made by walkers who crossed the mountains each summer.



- 4 The difficulties of living near the volcano are well understood by the people farm the land there.
- 5 The danger of driving is something which worries me each time I travel.
- 6 The park which I usually go running in is across the road.
- 7 I bought the present that I gave him it for Christmas in Japan.
- 8 The person whom we selected to represent us on the committee has had to resign due to illness.
- 9 It's one of the most interesting books I've read this year.

# Relative clauses (2) (10M, w n o IS only SIX, can speak three languages.)

**A** Some relative clauses are used to add extra information about a noun, but this information is not necessary to explain which person or thing we mean:

- Valerie Polkoff, **who has died aged 90**, escaped from Russia with her family in 1917.
- We received *an offer of £80, 000* for the house, **which we accepted**.

These are sometimes called **non-defining relative clauses**. We don't use them often in everyday speech, but they occur frequently in written English. Notice that we put a comma between the noun and a non-defining relative clause, and another comma at the end of this clause if it is not also the end of a sentence.

When we use a non-defining relative clause to add information about a **person or people**:

- we use **who** as the *subject* of the clause
  - One of the people arrested was Mary Arundel, **who** is a member of the local council.
- we use **who** or **whom** as the *object* of the clause, although **whom** is more formal and rarely used in spoken English:
  - Professor Johnson, **who(m)** I have long admired, is to visit the university next week.



When we use a non-defining relative clause to add information about a **thing or group of things**, we use **which** as the *subject* or *object* of the clause:

- These drugs, **which** are used to treat stomach ulcers, have been withdrawn from sale.
- That Masters course, **which** I took in 1990, is no longer taught at the college.

**That** is sometimes used instead of **which**, but some people think this is incorrect, so it is probably safer not to use it. We also use **which** to refer to the whole situation talked about in the sentence outside the relative clause:

- The book won't be published until next year, **which** is disappointing.
- I have to go to hospital on Monday, **which** means I won't be able to see you.

We can also use **whose** in a non-defining relative clause (see also Unit 72):

- Neil Adams, **whose** parents are both teachers, won first prize in the competition.

• Notice that we don't use **zero relative pronoun** in a non-defining relative clause.

**B** When we want to add information about the whole or a part of a particular number of things or people we can use a non-defining relative clause with **of which** or **of whom** after words such as **all, both, each, many, most, neither, none, part, some, a number** (one, two, etc.; the first, the second, etc.; half, a third, etc.) and **superlatives** (the best, the biggest, etc.):

- The speed of growth of a plant is influenced by a number of factors, **most of which** we have no control over.
- The bank was held up by a group of men, **three of whom** were said to be armed.
- The President has made many visits to Japan, **the most recent of which** began today.

We can use the following phrases at the beginning of a non-defining relative clause: **at which point/time, by which point/time, during which time, and in which case**:

- It might snow this weekend, **in which case** we won't go to Wales.
- The bandages will be taken off a few days after the operation, **at which point** we will be able to judge how effective the treatment has been.
- The next Olympics are in three years, **by which time** Stevens will be 34.

**EXERCISES**

- 71.1 Add one of the pieces of information below to each sentence. Add who or which, and put the non-defining relative clause in an appropriate place in the sentence. (A)

has-more-than-50-members- caused such damage in the islands      is an aviation expert  
stole a computer from the office      is set in the north of Australia      ended yesterday

, which has more than 50 members,

- 1 The Southam Chess Club ~~k~~ meets weekly on Friday evenings.
- 2 Dr Richard Newman was asked to comment on the latest helicopter crash.
- 3 The strike by train drivers is estimated to have cost over £3 million.
- 4 John Graham's latest film is his first for more than five years.
- 5 The police are looking for two boys aged about 14.
- 6 The hurricane has now headed out to sea.

- 71.2 Write two sentences as one, using a non-defining relative clause beginning with all, both, each, etc., + of which or of whom. (B)

- 1 The film is about the lives of three women. Kate Dillon plays all the women.  
**The film is** about the lives of three women, **all of whom** are **played** by **Kate Dillon**.



- 2 The island's two million inhabitants have been badly affected by the drought. Most of the island's inhabitants are peasant farmers.
- 3 She has two older brothers. Neither of her brothers went to university.
- 4 About 30 of her friends and relations came to the airport to welcome her back. Many of her friends and relations had travelled long distances.
- 5 The minister has recently visited Estonia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. They all have large Russian minorities.
- 6 The fish are multi-coloured. The biggest of the fish is only 2 cm long.
- 7 Scotland have won their last five international matches. One of these matches was against England.

- 71.3 Decide which of the underlined phrases is correct in these sentences and add an appropriate preposition in the space. (C)

- 1 I might fail the test, ..... in which case / which point I'd probably re-sit it next year.
- 2 A bull charged towards the car, ..... which time / which point I drove away quickly.
- 3 I didn't finish work until 10 o'clock, ..... which time / which case everyone had already gone home.
- 4 The meeting might go on for three or four hours, ..... which time / which case I'll be late home from work.
- 5 Sam started to tell one of his terrible old jokes, ..... which point / which case I decided that I should go home.
- 6 I hadn't seen Jane for nearly ten years, ..... which point / which time I had got married and had two children.

## RELATIVE CLAUSES (3): OTHER RELATIVE PRONOUNS

## A whose

We use a relative clause beginning with **whose** + **noun**, particularly in written English, when we talk about something belonging to or associated with a *person*. Compare:

- Stevenson is an architect. Her designs have won international praise. *and*
- Stevenson is an architect **whose designs** have won international praise.
- Dr Rowan has had to do all his own typing. His secretary resigned two weeks ago. *and*
- Dr Rowan, **whose secretary** resigned two weeks ago, has had to do all his own typing.

We can use **whose** in both *defining* and *non-defining relative clauses* (see Units 70 & 71).

We sometimes use **whose** when we are talking about *things*, in particular when we are talking about towns or countries, and organisations:

- 💡 • The film was made in *Botswana*, **whose wildlife parks** are larger than those in Kenya.  
 • We need to learn from *companies* **whose trading** is more healthy than our own.  
 • The newspaper is owned by *the Mearson Group*, **whose chairman** is Sir James Bex.

We can also use **whose** when we are talking about particular items, although it is often more natural in spoken English to avoid sentences like this:

- I received a *letter*, **whose poor spelling** made me think it was written by a child.  
*(more natural would be I received a letter, and its poor spelling...)*

## B where, when, whereby, why

We often use the words **where**, **when**, and **whereby** as relative pronouns. But in formal English in particular, a phrase with **preposition + which** can often be used instead:

- This was the place (**where**) we first met. *(or ...the place at/in which we...)*
- He wasn't looking forward to the time (**when**) he would have to give evidence to the court. *(or ...the time at which he would...)*
- Do you know the date **when** we have to submit the first essay? *(or ...the date on/by which we have to submit the first essay?)*
- The government is to end the system **whereby** (= by which means) farmers make more money from leaving land unplanted than from growing wheat. *(or ...the system in/by which farmers...)*

We can also use **why** as a relative pronoun after the word **reason**. In informal English we can use **that** instead of **why**:

- I didn't get a pay rise, but this wasn't the *reason why* I left. *(or ...the reason (that) I left.)*

## C who, what, whatever, whoever, whichever

We sometimes use relative clauses beginning with **who** or **what**. In this case, **who** means 'the people that' and **what** means something like 'the thing(s) that':

- Can you give me a list of who's been invited?
- I didn't know **what** to do next.

💡 Notice that we can't use **what** in this way after a noun:

- I managed to get all the *books that* you asked for. *(not ...books what you asked for.)*

Relative clauses beginning with **whatever** (= anything *or* it doesn't matter what), **whoever** (= the person/group who *or* any person/group who), or **whichever** (= one thing or person from a limited number of things or people) are used to talk about things or people that are indefinite or unknown:

- 💡 • I'm sure I'll enjoy eating **whatever** you cook.  
 • **Whoever** wins will go on to play Barcelona in the final.  
 • **Whichever** one of you broke the window will have to pay for it.

**EXERCISES**

- 721 Choose one of the relative clauses below to add to each sentence in an appropriate place. Use each relative clause once only. Add commas where necessary. (A)

whose first language is not English      whose caterpillars tunnel under the bark  
 whose-meanings-you-don't-know-      whose head office is situated in France  
 whose work involves standing for most of the day      whose mother is Indonesian

wHose meanings you don't know

- 1 First, go through the text underlining the words ↗ .
- 2 My friend Miriam has gone to live in Jakarta.
- 3 He's a teacher in London working with children.
- 4 People often suffer from backache.
- 5 It has been found that the trees are being destroyed by a moth.
- 6 The airline has recently begun to fly between Paris and Lima.

- 722 Choose one of the following phrases and either where, when, whereby, or why to complete these sentences. Use each phrase once only. (B)

the situation      -the-place-      the reason      the time      the agreement      the building

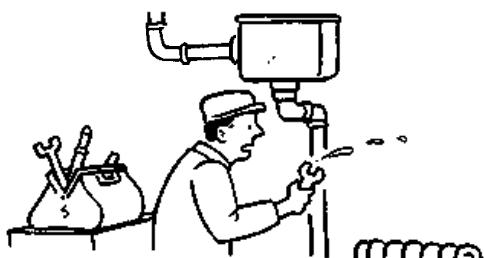
- 1 The beach is the place where I most like to be in the summer.
- 2 ..... whisky made in Japan can be sold in Britain has been criticised in Scotland.
- 3 The period during which Russ lived in Italy was also.....he began to paint.
- 4 The new law means an end to.....charities have to pay tax on money given to them.
- 5 ..... I used to work had 24 floors.
- 6 He has been unwell, and this may be.....he lost the match.

- 723 If the underlined word is correct, put a ✓. If not, suggest another word. (C)

- 1 Buy vanilla ice cream. It's the only flavour what he likes.
- 2 Whoever party comes to power at the election will face major economic problems.
- 3 The room was lit only by the candle that Martha carried.
- 4 It is difficult to predict that she will do next.
- 5 Whoever wins the contract to build the tunnel will have a very difficult job to do.
- 6 'Do you want to drive or go by train?' 'I'd prefer to travel what way is faster.'
- 7 Help yourself to fruit from the trees in the garden. Take whichever you want.
- 8 She had thought a lot about that she was going to say.

- 724 Define these items using whose (1-4) and in which (5-7). You may need to use a dictionary. (A)

- 1 A widower is a man wHose wife Has died and who Has not re-married.
- 2 An orphan is...
- 3 A plumber is... job it is to...
- 4 A refuse collector is...
- 5 A referendum is a vote...
- 6 Morse code is...
- 7 A chat show is...



# Relative clauses (4): prepositions in relative clauses

In formal styles we often put a preposition before the relative pronouns **which** and **whom**:

- The rate **at which** a material heats up depends on its chemical composition.
- In the novel by Peters, **on which** the film is based, the main character is a teenager.
- An actor **with whom** Gelson had previously worked contacted him about the role.
- Her many friends, **among whom** I like to be considered, gave her encouragement.

Notice that after a preposition you can't use **who** instead of **whom**, and you can't use **that** or zero relative pronoun:

- Is it right that politicians should make important decisions without consulting the public **to whom** they are accountable? (*not ...the public to who they are accountable.*)
- The valley **in which** the town lies is heavily polluted. (*not The valley in that the town...*)
- Arnold tried to gauge the speed **at which** they were travelling. (*not ...the speed at they were travelling.*)

In informal English we usually put the preposition later in the relative clause rather than at the beginning:

- The office **which** Graham led the way to was filled with books.
- Jim's footballing ability, **which** he was noted **for**, had been encouraged by his parents.
- The playground wasn't used by those children **who** it was built **for**.

**2** In this case we prefer **who** rather than **whom** (although 'whom' is used in formal contexts). In defining relative clauses we can also use **that** or **zero relative pronoun** instead of **who** or **which** (e.g. ...the children **(that)** it was built for).

If the verb in the relative clause is a two- or three-word verb (e.g. come across, **fill in**, go through, **look after**, **look up to**, **put up with**, **take on**) we don't usually put the preposition before the relative pronoun:

- Your essay is one of those **(which/that)** I'll go **through** tomorrow. (*rather than ...through which I'll go tomorrow.*)
- She is one of the few people **(who/that)** I look up **to**. (*not ...to whom I look up.*)

In formal written English, we often prefer to use **of which** rather than whose to talk about things:

- A huge amount of oil was spilled, *the effects of which* are still being felt. (*or ...whose effects are still being felt.*)
- The end of the war, *the anniversary of which* is on the 16th of November, will be commemorated in cities throughout the country. (*or ...whose anniversary is on...*)

Notice that we can't use **of which** instead of whose in the patterns described in Unit 71B:

- Dorothy was able to switch between German, Polish and Russian, **all of which** she spoke fluently, (*not ...all whose she spoke...*)

We can sometimes use **that...of** instead of **of which**. This is less formal than **of which** and whose, and is mainly used in spoken English:

- The school **that** she is head **of** is closing down. (*or The school **of which** she is head...*)

Whose can come after a preposition in a relative clause. However, it is more natural to put the preposition at the end of the clause in less formal contexts and in spoken English:

- We were grateful to Mr Marks, **in** whose car we had travelled home. (*or ...whose car we had travelled home in.*)
- I now turn to Freud, **from whose** work the following quotation is taken. (*or ...whose work the following quotation is taken from.*)

**EXERCISES**

73.1 Join the sentence halves using which or whom after an appropriate preposition. (A)

I would never have finished the work. it was primarily written.  
we know nothing. -they got a good view. he learned how to play chess.  
Dennis scored three goals in the final. she was born. it was discovered.

- 1 They climbed up to the top of a large rock, **from** which they got **a** good **view**.
- 2 I would like to thank my tutor,
- 3 She has now moved back to the house on Long Island
- 4 The star is to be named after Patrick Jenks,
- 5 This is the ball
- 6 He is now able to beat his father,
- 7 The book is enjoyed by adults as well as children,
- 8 There are still many things in our solar system

73.2 How would you express the sentences you have written in 73.1 in a less formal way, putting the preposition at the end of the relative clause? (A)

Example: 1 They climbed up to the top of **a** Urge rock, which they got **a** good **view from**.

73.3 Are these correct or appropriate? If they are, put a ✓. If they are not, give a reason, correct them and give alternatives if you can. (A)

- 1 It's a piece of jewellery across which I came ~~in~~ an antique shop. ...**which I came across in an antique shop.** ('came across' is a two-word verb.)
- 2 The extra work which she took on was starting to affect her health.
- 3 My mother, after whom I looked for over 20 years, died last year.
- 4 The people whom I work with are all very friendly.
- 5 Some of the criticisms with which they had to put up were very unfair.
- 6 He had many friends with whom he had a regular correspondence.
- 7 The woman to who he is engaged comes from Poland.
- 8 The forms which I had to fill in were very complicated.

73.4 Rewrite these sentences so that they are more appropriate for formal written English. Use preposition + which or preposition + whose, as appropriate. (B)

- 1 Tom Sims, whose car the weapons were found in, has been arrested. Tom **Sims, in** whose **car** the **weapons** were **found**, **has** been arrested.
- 2 Tom Hain, whose novel the TV series is based on, will appear in the first episode.
- 3 Dr Jackson owns the castle whose grounds the main road passes through.
- 4 Tessa Parsons is now managing director of Simons, the company that she was once a secretary in.
- 5 Allowing the weapons to be sold is an action that the Government should be ashamed of.
- 6 The dragonfly is an insect that we know very little of.

