

137 Relative clauses with **who**, **which** and **that**

A Introduction

Emma: / saw Natalie the other day.
Melanie: Natalie? The girl **who plays the piano**?
Emma: No, that's Natasha. Natalie is the student **who dropped out of college, the one who never did any studying**. She's working in Davidson's now, the shop **that sells very expensive clothes**.



The relative clauses in this conversation identify which person or thing we are talking about. The clause **who plays the piano** tells us which girl Melanie means. The clause **that sells very expensive clothes** tells us which shop Emma means.

Sometimes we can use an adjective or a phrase to identify someone or something.

Adjective: *the **tall** girl the **new** student the **red** car*

Phrase: *the man **in the suit** the shop **on the corner** the woman **with red hair***

But when we need a longer explanation, we can use a relative clause.

Relative clause: *the woman **who gets up early** the car **that broke down***

B Who, which and that

The relative pronouns **who**, **which** and **that** go after the noun and at the beginning of the relative clause.

Who refers to people.

*Nick is the **man who** owns that enormous dog. I don't like **people who** tell jokes all the time.*

*The little **girl who** sat next to me on the coach ate sweets the whole way.*

*Sarah is pretty annoyed with the **person who** stole her mobile phone. We can also use **that**, but it is less usual.*

*Jake is the **man that** plays the guitar.*

*The **woman that** lived here before us is a romantic novelist.*

That and **which** refer to things. **That** is more usual than **which**, especially in conversation.

*The **car that** won the race looked very futuristic, didn't it? They've recaptured all the **animals that** escaped from the zoo. The children saw the actual **spacecraft that** landed on the moon.*

Which can be a little formal.

*There are several **restaurants which** do Sunday lunches. Is*

*Zedco the **company which** was taken over last year?*

We do not use another pronoun like **he** or **it** with the relative pronoun.

NOT ~~the man **who**e owns that enormous dog~~ NOT ~~the actual spacecraft **that** it landed on the moon~~

In all these sentences **who**, **which** and **that** are the subject of the relative clause.

For **who**, **which** and **that** as object, see Units f 38 and f 39.

138 The relative pronoun as object

A Subject and object

Harriet is showing David her holiday photos.

Harriet: *That's an old castle **that we visited on holiday**. And those are some people **we met**, a couple **who were staying at the campsite**.*

David: *Mm. They look very friendly.*

A relative pronoun such as **who** or **that** can be the subject of a relative clause.

*Harriet talked to a couple **who were staying at the camp-site**. (**They** were staying at the camp-site.)*

*The postcard **that came this morning** was from Harriet. (*

It came this morning.)

A relative pronoun can also be the object of a relative clause.

*a woman **who they met on holiday**. *Mike and Harriet are visiting**

*(They met **her** on holiday.)*

*The old castle **that we visited** was really interesting.*

(We visited it.)

We do not use another pronoun like **her** or **it** with the relative pronoun. NOT

~~*a woman who they met her*~~ NOT ~~*the old castle that we visited it*~~

B Leaving out the relative pronoun

We can leave out the relative pronoun when it is the object of the relative clause. We do this especially in spoken English. Compare these examples.

WITH OBJECT PRONOUN

*The man **who Vicky saw** at the concert is Sarah's boss.*

*That's an old castle **that we visited**.*

WITHOUT OBJECT PRONOUN

*The man **Vicky saw** at the concert is Sarah's boss.*

*That's an old castle **we visited**.*

Here are some more examples of relative clauses without an object pronoun. We

*don't know the name of the person **the police are questioning**. The cakes **Melanie baked** were delicious. That jacket **you're wearing** is falling to pieces, Mike.*

Remember that we cannot leave out a pronoun when it is the subject of a relative clause.

*The man **who spoke** to Vicky is Sarah's boss.*

C Who and whom

In formal English, **whom** is sometimes used when the object of the relative clause is a person. *The person **who/whom** the police were questioning has now been released.* But in conversation **whom** is not very common.

139 Prepositions in relative clauses

Introduction

A relative pronoun (e.g. **that**) can be the object of a preposition (e.g. **for**).

*This is the bus **that** I've been waiting **for**.*

*I've been waiting **for** the bus.*

*The restaurant **that** we normally go **to** is closed today.*

*We normally go **to** the restaurant.*



In informal spoken English we normally put the preposition at the end of the relative clause. Compare the word order.

STATEMENT

*I've been waiting **for** the bus.*

*We go **to** the restaurant.*

RELATIVE CLAUSE

*the bus **that** I've been waiting **for***

*the restaurant **that** we go **to***

We do not use another pronoun like **it** or **her** after the preposition. NOT

*the restaurant **that** we go **to** **it*** NOT *someone **who** / work **with** her*

B Leaving out the pronoun

We often leave out the relative pronoun when it is the object of a preposition.

WITH OBJECT PRONOUN

*The bus **that** I'm waiting **for** is late.*

*Is this the article **which** you were interested **in**?*

*That's the man **who** I was talking **about**.*

WITHOUT OBJECT PRONOUN

*The bus I'm waiting **for** is late.*

*Is this the article you were interested **in**?*

*That's the man I was talking **about**.*

Here are some more examples of relative clauses without an object pronoun.

*I can't remember the name of the hotel **we stayed at**. This is the colour **we've finally decided on**. The shop **I got my stereo from** has lots of bargains.*

C A preposition at the beginning

These examples are typical of formal English.

*Was that the restaurant **to which** you normally go?*

*Electronics is a subject **about which** I know very little.*

*The Sales Manager is the person **from whom** I obtained the figures.* Here the preposition comes at the beginning of the relative clause, before **which** or **whom**.

We cannot put a preposition before **that** or **who**.

a subject (that) I know little about NOT ~~*a subject about that I know little*~~

the person (who) I got the figures from NOT ~~*the person from who I got the figures*~~

140 Relative structures with **whose**, **what** and **it**

A **Whose**

Vicky: *What I'd really like is a job in television.* Daniel: *The other day I met a man **whose sister** works in television.* Vicky: *Who? What's her name?* Daniel: *Oh, I don't know. She's the woman **whose car** Tom crashed into.*

Here **whose sister** means his sister (the sister of the man Daniel met), and **whose car** means her car (the car belonging to the woman). Here are some more examples.

*Someone **whose bicycle** had been stolen was reporting it to the police.*

*Wayne Johnson is the man **whose goal** won the game for United.*



We use **whose** mainly with people, e.g. someone, **the man**. But sometimes it goes with other nouns.

*Which is the European **country whose** economy is growing the fastest? Round the corner was a **building whose** windows were all broken. Melanie was looking after a **dog whose** leg had been broken in an accident.*

B **What**

We use the relative pronoun **what** without a noun in front of it. *The shop didn't have **what** I wanted.* (= the thing that I wanted) ***What** we saw gave us quite a shock.* (= the thing that we saw)

We can also use **what** to give emphasis to a word or phrase, to make it more important. Compare these examples.

NEUTRAL

Rachel's stereo kept me awake.
Vicky is looking for a job in television.
I want to make a fresh start.
They booked a holiday together.

EMPHATIC

***What** kept me awake was Rachel's stereo.*
***What** Vicky is looking for is a **job in** television.*
***What** I want to do is **make a fresh start**.*
***What** they did was **book a holiday together**.*

C **It**

We also use **it + be + a relative clause** to give emphasis.

NEUTRAL

Tom had an accident.
The computer gives me a headache.
I'm eating chocolate cake.
Mike's uncle died on Thursday.

EMPHATIC

***It was Tom** who had an accident (not David).*
***It's the computer** that gives me a headache.*
***It's chocolate cake** (that) I'm eating.*
***It was on Thursday** that Mike's uncle died.*

We must put in a pronoun when it is the subject of the relative clause (e.g. **who** had an accident). If it is the object (e.g. **that** I'm eating), then we can leave it out (see Unit 138B).

142 Relative pronouns and relative adverbs

A Pronouns in identifying and adding clauses

There are two kinds of relative clause: identifying and adding (see Unit 141).

Look at the pronouns in these examples.

IDENTIFYING

*I'm sure I know the person **who** served us.
The pop singer **whom** Guy invited onto his chat show never turned up. The woman **whose** flat was burgled spent the night at a friend's house. Towns **which/that** attract tourists are usually crowded in the summer.*

In an identifying clause we can use **who, whom, whose, which** or **that**.

ADDING

*Natalie, **who** served us, is a friend of Emma's.
Arlene Black, **whom** Guy invited onto his chat show, never turned up. Natasha, **whose** flat was burgled, spent the night at a friend's house. Oxford, **which** attracts many tourists, is often crowded in the summer.* In an adding clause we can use **who, whom, whose** or **which**. We do NOT use **that**.

B Leaving out the pronoun

Sometimes we can leave the pronoun out of an identifying clause (see Unit 138B).

*The woman (**who**) you met yesterday works in advertising.*

*Have you seen the book (**that**) I was reading?*

*Laura couldn't find the box (**that**) she kept her photos **in**.*

We cannot leave the pronoun out of an adding clause.

*Sarah, **whom** you met yesterday, works in advertising. That book 'Brighton Rock', **which** I was reading, is really good.*

*Laura had a wooden box, **in which** she kept her photos OR **which** she kept her photos **in**.*

C The relative adverbs **where, when** and **why**

Look at these examples.

*This is the place **where** the accident happened.*

*Do you remember the day **when** we moved the piano upstairs?*

*The reason **why** Nick came was that he wanted to see Rita.* We can leave out **when** or **why**, or we can use **that**.

*Do you remember the day (**that**) we moved the piano upstairs?*

*The reason (**that**) Nick came was that he wanted to see Rita.*

There are also adding clauses with **where** and **when**.

*We went to the Riverside Restaurant, **where** I once had lunch with Henry.*

*Mark likes to travel at night, **when** the roads are quiet.*

D A special use of **which**

In an adding clause, we can use **which** relating to a whole sentence, not just to a noun.

*It rained all night, **which** was good for the garden.*

Here **which** means 'the fact that it rained all night'.

Here are some more examples.

*David helped me clear up, **which** was very kind of him.*

*Sarah had to work late again, **which** annoyed Mark.*

*Tom pushed Nick into the swimming-pool, **which** seemed to amuse everyone.*