

GRAMMAR - RELATIVE CLAUSES

There are two types of relative clauses:

1. Use defining relative clauses to give essential information about which person, thing, place or time is being talked about. Do not use a comma before the relative pronoun.

This is the building in which I used to live.

2. Use non-defining clauses to give additional and non-essential information. Use commas to separate this clause from the rest of the sentence.

The tallest building of the city, which was built in 1985, is in my neighbourhood.

RELATIVE PRONOUNS:

- Who (people) - this is the man who sold me the car.
- Whom (people) – this is the girl about whom I was talking to you yesterday
- Which (things) - the film which I watched yesterday was really dull.
- When (times) - this was the time when I met your parents.
- Whose (possessions) - the car whose owner is my father is the red one.
- Where / in which (places) - this is the town where I was born and raised.
- The reason why (give reason) - the reason why I gave up smoking was...

In very formal English, use prepositions at the beginning of the relative clause. In this case always use whom, not who.

- She was someone to whom he regularly wrote love letters and sent flowers.
- The girl for whom I bought the ticket is my sister.

We can use "that" instead of "who, whom, when or which".

- This is the girl (who/that) is my classmate.
- I've just run into a woman (who/that) I went to the university with.

In defining clauses we can omit the pronouns "who, whom, which, that or when" if they're the object of the relative clause.

- My groom gave me a ring which belonged to his grandmother. (the subject of the relative clause is which, so we can't omit it)
- This is Gwen the girl (~~who~~) I'm going to marry. (The subject of the relative clause is I. Who is the object, so we can omit who)

In non-defining clause we cannot omit the relative pronoun and cannot use "that" instead of "who or which".

- Emily, who I rented her flat, is going to stay here for two weeks.

We can use which to refer to the whole of a previous clause or sentence.

- The plane was delayed by bad weather, which meant we had a four-hour wait.