

RELATIVE CLAUSES – RULES & EXERCISES

1) DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSE Here, 'who' defines the subject of each relative clause.

My brother who lives in the US is a teacher, whereas my brother who lives in London is a TV reporter. NO COMMAS are used to separate the relative clauses from the main sentence.

A defining clause specifies which person or thing we mean. It cannot be separated from the person or thing it describes.

Example: *By 4.30, there was only one painting which hadn't been sold.*

2) NON-DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSE

A non-defining clause contains extra information. In writing it is SEPARATED BY COMMAS from the main sentence; it's not normally used when speaking.

Examples: 1) *My brother, who's a pilot, lives in the US.*

2) *By 4.30, which was almost closing time, nearly all the paintings had been sold.*

WHO and WHOM - Use when the person referred to is the 1) direct object or 2) indirect object in a complex sentence containing a relative clause:

Example 1) *That's the man who (whom) I spoke to.* 'Whom' is very formal and has been replaced by 'who' in normal, everyday speaking.

Example 2) *To whom it concerns* This is used in formal emails and letters when we don't know the name of the person we are writing to. *To whom am I speaking?* VERY FORMAL and old fashioned, occasionally used when speaking on the telephone.

3) OBJECT DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSE

When the relative pronoun (who, which, where) refers to the OBJECT of the relative clause, *it can be omitted. Example: *Those are the students *(who / whom) I taught. That's the car (which / that) I used to drive.*

4) SUBJECT DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSE

When the relative pronoun refers to the SUBJECT of the relative clause, the *relative pronoun CANNOT BE OMITTED. Example: *Pierre is the man *who taught me French. That's the train *which brought me here.*

Below are examples of relative clauses:

- *It was a service for which I will be eternally grateful.*
- 'That' is often used instead of 'who' in everyday speech in defining clauses.
Do you know the girl who / that lives next door?

WHOSE

This means 'of whom'. It is used in both defining and non-defining clauses.

That's the man whose house was broken into.

Several guests, whose cars were parked outside, were waiting at the door.

Several guests whose rooms had been broken into complained to the manager.

WHERE

This is used to begin a relative describing location.

That's the house where I used to live. The church where I got married is at the end of the street.

WHEN

This is used to begin a relative clause describing time.

Example: *Tell me when it's time to go. I'll call you when I land.*

WHENEVER At any time

Call me whenever you need help.

WHOEVER Anyone

Whoever stole that money is in big trouble.

WHEREVER Anywhere

Jim will take a job wherever he can find it.

EXERCISE ONE

The following text contains TOO MANY 'which's' and 'that's'. Underline the ten extra ones, which are grammatically wrong.

Having just spent three weeks of my life sitting on an uncomfortable saddle, pounding the roads of France, I am in no fit state that to do anything except sit and write, which suits me fine. For I have cycled some 1,500 kilometres, a figure which includes some extremely hilly routes, and frankly the thought of mounting a bicycle again which is not one that I can face for a good few days yet. The journey, which I undertook alone for most of the way, was all in the name of charity - Help the Aged, a cause which I support whenever that I can.

Having organised my sponsorship, which I arrived in France armed only with a tiny map of the Tour de France route, which hastily removed from last month's 'Cycling World' magazine. My intention which was to try and follow the route that the professionals take, but after three days in which I pushed my body to extremes that it had never experienced before, that I rapidly abandoned this plan and returned to flatter ground. On the flat which I was able to keep to about 120 kilometres a day, which is respectable. I did have to rest my weary limbs at the weekends, though, which enabled me to recharge my batteries, bywhich I mean my bodily ones, not the ones that inside my bike lights. I am pleased to say, that after three tortuous weeks, which I ended up in Marseilles, but what pleased me all the more is that I managed to raise over £2,000 for Help the Aged.

EXERCISE TWO Complete each sentence with one suitable word.

- a) Midway through the second half City scored their fourth goal, at which point United gave up completely.
- b) There is one person to _____ I owe more than I can say.
- c) It was the kind of accident for _____ nobody was really to blame.
- d) _____ leaves last should turn off the lights.
- e) Mary was late yesterday, _____ was unusual for her.
- f) At 6.00, _____ was an hour before the plane was due, thick fog descended.
- g) I don't know _____ told you that, but they were wrong.
- h) The first time I saw you was _____ you answered the door.
- i) Mrs. Brown was the first owner _____ dog won three prizes in the same show
- j) I've just spoken to Sally, _____ sends you her love.

EXERCISE THREE

**Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given.
Do not change the word given.**

A) I waited for him until 6.30 and then gave up. WHICH

Answer: I waited for him until 6.30, at which point I gave up and went home.

b) We suggested a lot of things, which were all rejected. WAS

Everything we _____ rejected.

c) If someone understands this book, they are cleverer than I am. IS

Anyone _____ cleverer than I am

d) I won't tell you this again, you naughty boy. TIME

This _____ tell you, you naughty boy.

e) The whole summer was sunny and warm, for a change. MADE

The whole summer was sunny and warm, _____ nice change.

f) I don't really approve of his proposal. WHAT

I don't really approve of _____ proposing.

g) The police never caught the culprit. COMMITTED

The police never caught _____ the crime.

h) I have read all of her books but one. THAT

There is only _____ I have not read.

i) I can't remember the last heavy rain. WHEN

I can't remember _____ heavily.

j) Do you get on with your next-door neighbour? WHO

Do you get on with _____ lives next door?

EXERCISE FOUR

Make one sentence with a relative clause from the sentences given, beginning as shown. Make any other necessary changes. Omit any unnecessary relative pronouns.

Example: a) *We eventually caught a train. It was one that stops at every station. The train (which) we eventually caught was one that stops at every station.*

b) *Slamming* b) *Carol slammed the door behind her. Her father had given her a car as a present. She drove off in it.*

Slamming _____

c) *At the end of the street was a building. The street was crowded with shoppers. Tom had not noticed the building before.*

At the end of the street _____

d) *Some people have just moved in next door. They have the same surname as some other people. Those other people have just moved out.*

The people who have just moved in next door _____

e) *I noticed that the door was open. I decided to go in. This turned out to be a mistake.*

Noticing _____

f) *Everyone expects the Popular Party candidate, Flora Benstead, to win the election. She has announced that she will cut income tax by 10% if elected.*

Flora Benstead, _____

g) *I listened to George patiently until he started insulting me. At that point, I told him a few home truths. He didn't like it.*

I listened to George patiently until he started insulting me, _____

h) *Pauline asked me a question. I had no reply to it.*

Pauline asked me _____

i) *He rushed out of the room. He was shouting at the top of his voice. This was typical.*

Shouting _____

c) *At the end of the street was a building. The street was crowded with shoppers. Tom had not noticed the building before.*

At the end of the street _____

d) *Some people have just moved in next door. They have the same surname as some other people. Those other people have just moved out.*

The people who have just moved in next door _____

e) *I noticed that the door was open. I decided to go in. This turned out to be a mistake.*

Noticing _____

EXERCISE FIVE

Correct the mistake in each sentence. Omit any unnecessary relative pronouns in your corrections.

a) to take my life in my hands, I walked to the very end of the high diving board.

ANSWER: Taking my life in my hands,

b) I wasn't sure what to address the letter to, so I wrote 'The Manager.'

c) Most of the guests turned up two hours early, that took us by surprise.

d) Whoever that he spoke to last was probably the person who murdered him.

e) The book I bought for his birthday is one where I enjoyed very much myself.

f) There's a chance that I may be late, in that case I'll phone you.

g) Everyone admires her. She's the kind of person whose everyone looks up to.

h) No one knows who she is. She is the only member of the gang who the identity remained a secret.