

# RELATIVE CLAUSES

# What are relative clauses?

Subordinate clauses which allow us to add information about people or things we are talking to, without a need to repeat the name  
e.g. That is *the house*. *The house* was built on the main road.

That is *the house* **which** was built on the main road.

Relative clauses are introduced just after the **antecedent** and are introduced by a pronoun or a relative adverb. The most frequent ones are:

**who; whom; which; that** (only in defining relative clauses) and relative adverbs:  
**where; when; why.**

After preposition you write whom for people and which for things, but it is more common to place prepositions at the end of the sentence (and it is more usual in spoken English).

e.g. This is the boy about **whom** you were asking me

This is the boy (**who**) you were asking me about.

Only whom and which, you can't use it with that

# DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

They give essential information about their *antecedent* and without them, the meaning will be incompleting. That is why you write them **without** commas. (oraciones especificativas)

The computer **which** we bought is very expensive

The man **who** is coming will bring us the present

Relative pronouns *can't* be omitted if it's the subject of the relative clauses.

The man **who** visited yesterday is an actor

The house **that** was so old was rebuilt.

But if it's not the subject it *can* be omitted

the man (**whom/that**) I met at the party told me the truth

The house (**which/that**) we bought is very comfortable

If the relative pronoun is followed by a verb, then it can't be omitted. If the relative is followed by a subject + verb, then it's almost sure you can drop it

**whose** can't be omitted, though it's never a subject

e.g. the horse **whose** leg you broke had to be killed

**'what'** means *'el que'* *'les cosas que'* and is used when the antecedent is understood

e.g. I know **what** you did last summer.

# NON-DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

If we remove this relative clause, there's no problem to understand the main sentence, since it gives extra information. Thus, we write it between commas.

e.g. The European Police Force, **which** began working in 1999, is called Europol.



The antecedent is usually a proper name of a person or thing and it contains a possessive like 'my', 'his', 'her', the definite article 'the' or demonstratives like 'this', 'that', 'these' or 'those':

My house, **which** is quite comfortable, needs redecorating.

This book, **which** I bought last week, is not as interesting as I thought.

## Main Features:

- Between commas
- ‘That’ is not allowed
- The relative pronoun can’t be omitted
- It’s less frequent than defining relative clauses. It is more formal and usually used in written texts.

# RELATIVE CLAUSES

## DEFINING

They give us essential information

### PRONOUNS

WHO  
THAT

WHICH  
THAT

WHOSE

WHEN/THAT

WHERE

WHOM

## NON-DEFINING

The information given is not essential, it can be omitted.

### PRONOUNS

WHO

WHICH

WHOSE

WHEN

WHERE