

Relative Clauses

Relative clauses are dependent clauses (have a subject and a verb, and possibly an object) that begin with *who*, *whom*, *that*, or *which*. We use relative clauses to provide extra information about nouns or noun phrases, so they act as long adjectives, which means that they describe nouns.

- Relative clauses begin with relative pronouns, they are:

WHO
THAT
WHICH

These function as **SUBJECTS** of a relative clause. **Who** refers to people, **that** refers to people and things, and **which** refers only to things.

The teacher called out the names of those students who (or that) were absent.
(*Who/That* refers to students and is the subject of the relative clause.)

The book that (or which) was left on the table is no longer there.
(*That/Which* refers to the book and is the subject of the relative clause.)

WHOM
THAT
WHICH

These can function as a DIRECT OBJECT in a relative clause. **Whom** refers to people, **that** refers to people and things, and **which** refers only to things.

I think that the gift that (or which) I found will please Samuel.
(*That/Which* is the object of found and refers to the gift.)

The student whom (or that) they have chosen to be editor of the class newspaper does not want the job.
(*Whom/That* refers to the student and is the direct object of have chosen in the relative clause. In spoken English, **who** can be used, but not be used in formal, written English.)

ADDITIONAL RELATIVE PRONOUNS AND THEIR USES:

- Whom**, **that**, and **which** may be omitted when they function as direct objects if the writer wishes to do so. (I think the gift I found will please Samuel.)

- Whom** and **which** can function as the object of a preposition in a relative clause. **Whom** refers to people and **which** refers to things.

The person for whom these plane reservations were made never picked up the tickets. (**Whom** is the object of the preposition for and refers to the person)

The history class in which Adela enrolled requires a term paper. (**Which** is the object of the preposition in and refers to the history class.)

- Whose** functions as a possessive pronoun in a relative clause and refers to people or things. The person **whose** books are on the table will be back soon. (**Whose** shows that the books belong to the person.)

- Relative clauses can also be connected to the nouns they modify with the relative adverbs **when**, **where**, and **why**.

The restaurant where we ate is only open for dinner.

Tell me the reason why you had so much difficulty with the exam.

I will never forget the time when the teacher got mad at us in class.

ACTIVITY: CHOOSE THE CORRECT RELATIVE PRONOUN

DIRECTIONS: Fill in the blanks with the correct relative pronoun who, whom, whose, which, that. In some cases, more than one answer is possible.

1. Mark thanked the tutor _____ had worked with him for the whole semester.
2. Dr. Ruiz is the professor _____ economics course I am planning to take next semester.
3. The person with _____ I share a locker is over there.
4. The backpack _____ is on the chair is mine.
5. Portland is a city _____ residents tend to be environmentally aware.

ACTIVITY 2: CREATE YOUR OWN SENTENCES

Combine each of the following sets of sentences into one sentence using a relative clause.

1. Genetic engineering is a relatively new technology. It is expected to help immensely in agriculture.

2. The man is a lawyer. I am renting his house.

3. The people were late. We were waiting for them.

4. She borrowed a bicycle. Its tires were slightly flat.

5. Today Michael plans to do the lab experiment. He was unable to do the experiment last week.

6. The students was asked to make a speech at commencement. The student got the highest grades in the class.
