

28 Relative clauses 1

*Any City expert **who would rather talk than listen** has forgotten **what** made him an expert in the first place.*

(The Economist, 19.0200)

A Relative clauses

- Relative clauses are short phrases beginning with words like *who*, *that* and *which* that define or describe people and things. There are two types:

- Defining relative clauses: we use these to identify exactly which person or thing we mean.

*The candidate **who we interviewed on Friday** is better than this one.*

The relative clause is part of the noun phrase. The information is necessary for the sentence to make sense.

- Non-defining relative clauses: we use these to add extra information about a person or thing.

*Capellas, **whose father was a Greek immigrant who entered the United States after World War II**, returned yesterday to Greece on a business trip.* (International Herald Tribune website)

The information may be interesting, but it is not a necessary part of the sentence. To show this in writing we use commas.

Non-defining clauses are more common in writing. In speech, we often give the same information by just using two short sentences. Compare:

*The salesman, **who was very helpful**, said this model was in stock.* (writing)

'The salesman was very helpful. He said this model was in stock.' (speech)

- Look again at the previous example. Remember that we are just adding extra information about a salesman. If there is more than one salesman and we want to say which one we are talking about, then we use a defining relative clause.

*'The salesman **who I spoke to on the phone yesterday** said this model was in stock, but now you tell me that you don't have any. I've come all the way here to buy it.'*

B Relative pronouns

- The words *who*, *which*, *that*, *whom* and *whose* can begin a relative clause. They are called relative pronouns.

- For people both *who* and *that* are used, but *who* is more common.

*The candidate **who** they chose for the job has a finance background.*

- For things or ideas both *which* and *that* are used, but *that* is more common, especially in speech.

*The products **that** you ordered were sent today.*

*The food sector faces another problem. In order to participate in the EU's single market it will have to conform to the Common Agricultural Policy, **which makes up 40% of all EU regulations**.*

(Business Central Europe website)

*The fight for survival of daily business will be won by the organizations **that adapt** most successfully to the new world **that is developing**.* (BusinessWeek website)

- The relative pronoun *whose* shows that something belongs to someone or something.

*I've invited to the meeting everyone **whose work is relevant to this project**.*

*The European Union is an organisation **whose policies change quite slowly**.*

*He owns 100 per cent of this company, **whose sales hit close to \$3 million in 1998**.* (Asia, Inc. website)

- In formal English it is possible to use *whom* instead of *who* where *who* is the object of the sentence. But in modern English most speakers only use *who*.

*The candidate **who/whom** we chose for the job has an MBA in corporate finance.*

Leaving out the relative pronoun in a defining relative clause

- We can leave out *who*, *which*, *that* (but not *whose*) in a defining relative clause if they are followed immediately by a noun or pronoun.
*The technician **(who)** Tony spoke to said the network was working fine.*
*The salad **(which/that)** I had for my starter was superb.*
 This is usual in spoken English.
- We must keep the relative pronoun if it is followed immediately by a verb.
*The technician **who spoke** to Tony said the network was working fine.*
*The salad **which/that came** with the fish was superb.*

Non-defining relative clauses

- We must keep the relative pronoun in non-defining clauses. We cannot leave it out (it makes no difference whether it is followed by a noun or a verb).
*The technician, **who my colleagues** know well, said the network was working fine.*
*The technician, **who spent** over an hour here, said the network was working fine.*
*The salad, **which he'd** spent hours preparing, was superb.*
*The salad, **which** had avocado in it, was superb.*
- *That* is never used in a non-defining relative clause.
*Chile, **which** is an important market for us, is having some currency problems.*

Relative pronouns and prepositions

- Normally we put prepositions at the end of the relative clause.
 - The person **(who)** I got these figures **from** said they were accurate.*
 - Unilever is a company **(that/which)** we know quite a lot about.*
 - The person **(who)** I spoke **to** was called Pam.*
- But in formal English it is possible to put prepositions in front of *whom*, *which* and *whose* (but not *who* or *that*). Compare with the previous examples:
 - The person **from whom** I got these figures said they were accurate.* (formal, rare)
 - Unilever is a company **about which** we know quite a lot.* (formal, rare)
 - The person ~~to who~~ I spoke was called Pam.* (incorrect)
- We do not put another pronoun after the preposition.
 (NOT *Unilever is a company that we know quite a lot about #.*)



"Miss Dugan, will you send someone in here who can distinguish right from wrong?"

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Relative clauses 2

*The company **that made the DAX index jump** was Deutsche Telekom. Traders said that big shareholders **who received hundreds of millions of shares as part of Telekom's purchase of US-based VoiceStream** intended to hold on to their Telekom shares.*

(Frankfurter Allgemeine website)

A Combining sentences

- Look at this example of two short separate sentences.
I'm taking a flight. It goes via Frankfurt.

We can combine the sentences using a relative clause. There are two ways, but the meanings are the same.

a) *I'm taking a flight **that goes via Frankfurt**.*

OR

b) *The flight **(that) I'm taking** goes via Frankfurt.*

- See unit 24 ● Note that articles often change when sentences are combined.

a) has **a flight**, like the original short sentence, because the flight is mentioned for the first time and there are several of them.

b) has **the flight** because there is only one in the speaker's mind.

- See unit 28 ● Remember that we often leave out the relative pronoun (*that*) in spoken English in cases like this.

- When we combine sentences we do not add another pronoun.

a) NOT *I'm taking a flight that ~~it~~ goes via Frankfurt.*

b) NOT *The flight that I'm taking ~~it~~ goes via Frankfurt.*

B Use of *what*

- We can use the relative pronoun *what* to mean *the thing(s) that*.

*I didn't understand **what** she said.* (= the things that she said)

***What** we need is a better marketing strategy.* (= the thing that we need is)

*Having a few huge corporations control our outlets of expression could lead to less aggressive news coverage and a more muted marketplace of ideas. Conglomeration affects **what** the media companies do and, in turn, **what** you read, watch, and hear.* (Brilllcontent website)

C Use of *where*, *when* and *why*

- We can use the relative adverbs *where*, *when* and *why* with their normal meanings to identify which thing we are talking about.

*Analysts said it was difficult to understand **the reason why the European Central Bank had cut rates**.* (Observer website)

- We can leave out *when* or *why*, or use *that*.

*Do you remember the day **(when) I started working here?***

*Do you remember the day **that I started working here?***

- We must keep *where*, except when there is a preposition at the end of the clause. In this case we leave it out or use *that*.

*The hotel **where I stayed** was quite cheap.*

*The hotel **(that) I stayed in** was quite cheap.*

D Relative clauses with a participle (-ing, -ed)

- The relative clause can have a continuous verb form (with an *-ing* ending) or a passive verb form (with an *-ed* ending).

The people **who are making the real decisions** are all at Head Office.

The products **that were attracting most interest** were the smaller, lighter models.

Passengers **who are seated in rows J-P** can now board the aircraft.

Food **which is sold in supermarkets** needs a relatively long shelf-life.

- In these cases we can simplify the sentence by leaving out both the relative pronoun and the verb *be*.

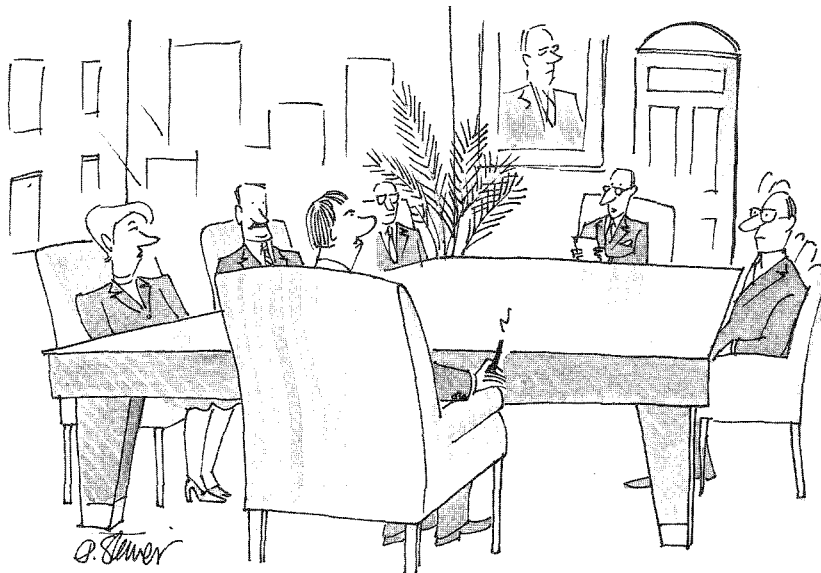
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Asda, now owned by Wal-Mart, is keen to increase the space in its stores devoted to household goods, electricals and entertainment products. (Independent website)



"David, as head of our acquisitions division, your annual bonus is 10 million dollars, from which we deduct 2 million for the coffee fund."