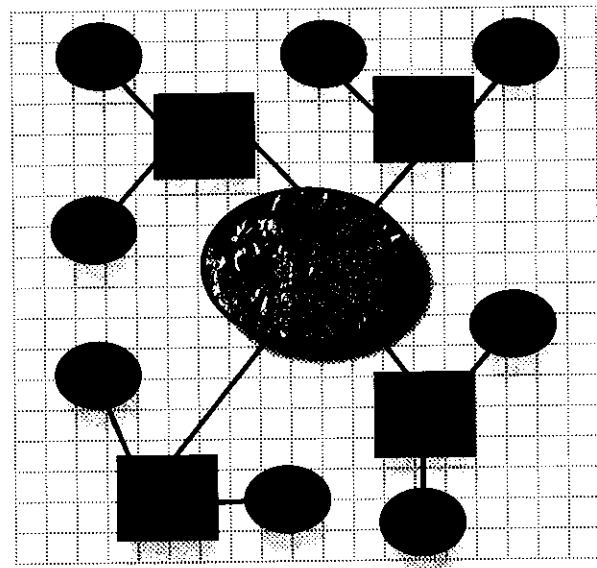


05 Relative clauses

Introduction



Read the adapted extract from a textbook on organization types and look at the relative clauses (1–4). Then answer the questions (a–c).

The first organization **which** we will consider has a strong leader and a spider web structure: power and influence radiate out from the centre, so what matters is staying close to the hub, **where** decisions are taken, and staying close to the individual **who** matters most. Growing beyond a certain size is problematic: the leader **who** created a success, possibly from nothing, is typically reluctant to let go.

(Adapted from *Understanding Organisations* by Charles B. Handy)

a How is relative clause 1 different from relative clause 2?

b Which relative pronouns (in bold) could be replaced by the word *that*? Would it make any difference to the meaning or style?

c Which relative pronoun could be removed from the text altogether? Would it make any difference to the meaning or style?

Suggested answers: see page 194

Relative clauses allow you to include additional information within a sentence in a clear and economical way. They are normally divided into two types: defining relative clauses, where the information 'defines' a noun, and is therefore essential to the meaning; and non-defining relative clauses, where the information may be useful, but the sentence would still be meaningful without it.

- *The National Carbon Company was the first manufacturer **which** recognized the potential of the dry cell battery.* (defining)
- *Claude Monet, **who** spent much of his childhood in Le Havre, was a founder of French impressionist painting.* (non-defining)

The relative pronouns *who* and *whom* (for people), and *which* (for things) can represent the subject or the object of a defining clause.

- *Yves Saint Laurent has been described as the designer **who** changed the world of women's fashion.* (= *He* (subject) changed the world ...)
- *The methods **which** we use to learn languages vary from country to country.* (= *We use them* (object) to ...)

This unit begins by focusing on the two types of relative clause, then looks at the different relative pronouns you can use, and finishes by describing how participles work in relative clauses.

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For other units that deal with the adding of information, see unit 3 *Noun phrases*, unit 7 *Connectors*, and unit 18 *Using defining language*.

5.1 Defining relative clauses

5.1 study

The relative pronouns *which* and *who* can be replaced with *that* in defining relative clauses, and can be left out altogether when they relate to the object of the sentence.

- *The first car **which** I bought was a Honda.*
= *The first car **that** I bought was a Honda.*
= *The first car I bought was a Honda.*

However, in academic English, *who* is rarely changed to *that* when it relates to the subject.

- *Yves Saint Laurent has been described as the designer **who** (not ~~that~~) changed the world of women's fashion.*

Who and *which* tend to be left out altogether only when they are followed by a pronoun.

- *The scientists **who/that** the Americans hired were originally from Germany.*
- *The methods **we** use to learn languages vary from country to country.*

TIP Remember not to repeat the object in a defining relative clause.

- *We're going to finish the presentation with the slide **(that)** I showed you ~~it~~ at the beginning.*

5.1 test yourself

Rewrite the sentences to include a defining relative clause, using the information in brackets.

- 1 Some doubts were raised about the quality of the questionnaire. (The group used it in the research.)
- 2 The shoe company was based in Dundee. (It made the largest profits.)
- 3 The folding bicycle is selling very well. (They designed it at their workshop in York.)
- 4 Hewitt questioned the experience of the software engineers. (Wentworth plc recruited them.)
- 5 The director later wrote a memoir. (He pioneered the tracking shot.)
- 6 The region is crossed by two main roads. (They require substantial repairs.)

5.2 Non-defining relative clauses

5.2 study

Non-defining clauses are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.

- *The stethoscope, **which** René Laennec invented in 1816, is used for listening to the body's internal sounds.*

The relative pronouns *who* or *which* can refer to the object of the clause as above, or the subject.

- *Frank Lloyd Wright, **who** designed the Guggenheim Museum in New York, was recognized in 1991 by the American Institute of Architects as 'the greatest American architect of all time'.*

In non-defining relative clauses *who* and *which* cannot be left out or changed to *that*.

TIP It may help to think of the commas in non-defining relative clauses as 'protecting' the relative pronouns from being changed to *that* or being left out.

Non-defining relative clauses do not always have to come in the middle of the sentence; they can come at the end, too.

- *A great deal has been written about the naturalist Joy Adamson, **who** famously raised a lion cub herself.*

A relative clause beginning with *which* at the end of a sentence can be useful in referring to a whole idea, rather than a specific noun.

- *In his speeches Martin Luther King often referred to the hope of building a new America, **which** inspired many of the audience to take up active politics for the first time. (*which* = King's reference to the hope of building a new America)*

5.2 test yourself

Rewrite the sentences to include a non-defining relative clause, using the information in brackets.

- 1 In a case of gross misconduct an employer may fire an employee immediately. (This includes theft.)
- 2 Bill Grayson handed his small pharmaceutical business to his daughter. (She transformed it into a multinational corporation.)
- 3 Turkey has land borders with eight countries. (This has frequently led to a kind of diplomatic balancing act.)
- 4 Vegetable oils have seen recent volatility in their spot price. (They are traded as commodities.)
- 5 Barbara Hepworth created *Single Form* for the United Nations building in New York. (Critics regarded her as a key Modernist sculptor.)

5.3 Whom and whose

5.3 study

- 1 *Whom* is the object form of *who*. Because it sounds rather formal, it tends to be replaced in defining clauses by *that*, or to be left out completely (see section 5.1).
 - *The teachers (whom/that) we interviewed all spoke well of the new staff development scheme.*

In non-defining clauses, you can use *who* rather than *whom* to refer to the object, except in very formal styles.

- *The CEO, who we met at lunch, was optimistic about the company's long-term prospects.*

You must use *whom*, however, after prepositions.

- *Radovan Karadžić stated at his tribunal hearings that Madeleine Albright was the diplomat with whom he had held secret talks.*

- 2 *Whose* + noun in defining and non-defining clauses indicates possession both by people and things (such as companies, government agencies, committees, etc. and books, plays, films, etc.).
 - *A relative whose blood type is compatible may be able to donate a kidney if they wish to.*
 - *Buyers International is one of the companies whose opposition to the deal is well known.*

An alternative to *whose*, when writing about things (not people), is the preposition *of* + *which*.

- *Alice Miller wrote an important book on the psychology of childhood, whose title/the title of which, The Drama of Being a Child, indicates the strength of her views on our early years.*
- *An international conference on intellectual copyright, the details of which have not yet been announced, is likely to be held later this year.*

5.3 test yourself

Complete each sentence with one or two words. If no words are necessary, write –.

- 1 New employees should have a mentor from _____ they can obtain advice.
- 2 Coca-Cola is an example of a company _____ brand has undeniably passed the worldwide recognition test.
- 3 All of the scientists _____ she met expressed their doubts over the viability of cold fusion as an energy source.
- 4 The government has proposed an amendment to the legislation, the aim _____ is to restrict the number of local radio stations that can be owned by one person.
- 5 Sharon Olwyn, _____ the Prime Minister promoted to the Cabinet, resigned in protest over the issue in 2005.
- 6 All the staff on patrol at the reserve are in radio contact with the head keeper _____ they make hourly reports.

5.4 In which, from which, to whom, etc.

5.4 study

In spoken English, relative clauses may end with a preposition.

- *And here is a photo of the project team and the local villagers who we worked with.*

In academic writing such prepositions are normally placed before the relative pronoun.

- *Langham (2009) argues that Alan Turing is the mathematician to whom computer science owes the greatest debt.*
- *HM Prison Maze is the prison from which thirty-eight prisoners escaped on 25 September 1983.*
- *Simón Bolívar, in whose honour statues have been erected in many of the towns and cities of Venezuela, played a significant role in the Latin American struggle for independence.*

Notice how a determiner such as *many*, *each*, *some*, *neither*, etc. or a number, percentage, etc. can be placed before *of* + relative pronoun.

- *There are hundreds of small businesses in the area, many of which are interdependent.*
- *The company has a staff of 1,200, 60% of whom work on a part-time basis.*

Two prepositional phrases that you will find useful are *the way in which* and *the extent to which*.

- *Most observers agree that the way in which Nelson Mandela handled his former political enemies after he took up the presidency of South Africa was exemplary. (This avoids two that-clauses: ... agree that the way that Nelson Mandela ...)*
- *No one can be sure of the extent to which the search for water in parts of Africa will become the key source of conflict over the next fifty years.*

Two other useful expressions are *at which point* and *in which case*.

- *A fight may break out amongst the players, at which point the referee is entitled to bring the game to a close.*
- (This avoids writing ... *the players, and at this point, the referee ...* or ... *the players, and if this happens, the referee ...*)
- *There is a risk that water levels in the reservoir may fall again, in which case the local authorities will have to consider a system of rationing.*

5.4 test yourself

A Complete each sentence with one of the phrases in the box. Two phrases are not needed.

from whom with whom three of which
in which to which at which
neither of which from whose

- 1 Several charities have criticized Westminster Council for the way _____ it has cut funding to the shelter for homeless people in Charing Cross.
- 2 If these types of fault occur in a bridge, there are two options for repair, _____ is cheap.
- 3 The rebel leaders _____ the negotiations were conducted seemed unwilling to make any concessions.
- 4 A break-even analysis determines _____ point sales cover the production costs.
- 5 John Loudon McAdam was a Scottish engineer _____ name the road-surfacing material tarmac (or tarmacadam) is derived.
- 6 The hospital then carried out a routine check of the emergency generators, _____ were found to be defective.

5.5 Where, when, why, and what in relative clauses

5.5 study

It may sometimes be more economical to use *where*, *when*, or *why* instead of a preposition + *which*.

- 1 *Where* is common in academic English and often follows the words *place* (or *region*, *country*, etc.), *area*, *situation*, *point*, and *case*.
 - *Assisted suicide is an area of medical care in which many doctors disagree.*
= *Assisted suicide is an area of medical care where many doctors disagree.*
 - *A situation may occur where the police need to 'kettle' or contain a group of demonstrators.*
 - *Negotiations often reach a point where one side feels it has conceded too much ground.*
 - *India is a continent where we are likely to see substantial economic growth over the next fifteen years.*

TIP In relative clauses with *situation*, *point* or *case* + *where*, *where* is sometimes replaced by *when* (without a change in meaning).

- *Zoologists have described cases (where) when a shark will attack a vulnerable member of its own species.*

- 2 *When* is used with dates, and with words such as *time, day, year, occasion, moment, and period*.
- *In 2004, when the Sumatra-Andaman earthquake occurred, few expected it to trigger a tsunami of such overwhelming power.*
 - *The recession began at a time when many British businesses were hoping for a period of extended growth.*
 - *On the day when the agreement was signed, many people felt that the country would enter into a new period of long-term stability.*
- 3 *Why* is used with the word *reason*, sometimes in the phrase *there is no reason why*.
- *What are the major reasons why we are losing so much biodiversity?*
 - *There is no reason why green technology cannot be competitive.*
- 4 *The thing(s) which/that ...* can be replaced with *what*.
- *Most of the delegates seemed to disagree with what the minister said. (= the things that the minister said)*
 - *What we expect from a good business leader is a sense of long-term vision for the company.*

5.5 test yourself

A Replace the underlined phrases with *where, when, why, or what*.

- 1 Some start-up businesses seem set on entering areas in which there is already a great deal of competition.
- 2 There are several reasons for which Jaguar Land Rover may close its factory at Castle Bromwich.
- 3 Mergers are situations in which staff naturally feel that their jobs may be at risk.
- 4 Deciding the things that should be included in a questionnaire is sometimes a difficult task.
- 5 Staff cuts at the charity became necessary after a period in which corporate and individual donations both fell.
- 6 There are several cities in which exhibitions of surrealist art have been particularly successful.
- 7 The English Civil War can be said to have started on 22 August 1642, the day on which Charles I raised his standard at Nottingham.
- 8 The thing that the marchers were hoping for was a swing in public opinion against the government's proposals.

B Complete the sentences with *where, when, why* or *what*.

- 1 March is the month _____ moles begin to appear above ground, having spent much of the winter lining their tunnels with fallen leaves.
- 2 Grier (2008) suggests that in the early 1990s, the company car phenomenon was the reason _____ prices in the UK car business stayed consistently higher than those in the rest of Europe.
- 3 Tonga is the only island nation in the region _____ formal colonization has never taken place.
- 4 Experts noticed that the video footage had been edited at precisely the point _____ government tanks arrived at the demonstration.
- 5 Patients who do not respond to hypnotherapy may fear being unable to cope with _____ will emerge during a session under hypnosis.
- 6 In the sentencing of rioters, most judges felt that there was no reason _____ maximum penalties should not be applied.
- 7 Ronald Reagan's election to the White House occurred at a moment _____ the credibility of the American presidency was at a particularly low point, according to Shah (2010).
- 8 The aim of the conference was to consider _____ makes one local community work better than its neighbour.

5.6 Participles in relative clauses

5.6 study

In defining relative clauses, you may be able to improve your sentences in terms of economy and flow by using a past participle or a present participle form of the verb instead of a relative pronoun + verb. This structure is called a 'participle clause' or a 'reduced relative clause'.

These past participles are commonly used in participle clauses: *based, caused, concerned, given, involved, made, obtained, produced, required, taken, and used*.

- *The team studied the results (which were) produced by the survey for some weeks before publishing their conclusions.*
- *According to the police, all the people (who were) involved in the incident were interviewed at the time.*

- *Statements (which are) taken from witnesses many weeks after the event are likely to be unreliable.*
- *It is reasonable to question the accuracy of information (which is) obtained through torture.*

These present participles are commonly used in participle clauses: *arising, concerning, consisting, containing, involving, relating, requiring, resulting, and using*.

- *The newspaper argued that it was publishing a story concerning the public interest. (= which concerned the public interest)*
- *All the data relating to individuals is destroyed after the results of the survey are established. (= which relates to individuals ...)*
- *A search involving more than a thousand police officers was unable to find the missing girl. (= A search which involved ...)*

Note that present participles can't be used if the relative pronoun represents the object.

- *The methods using which we use to learn languages vary from country to country.*

TIP Reduced relative clauses are also used with adjectives such as *available, necessary, possible, responsible, and suitable*: *The official who was responsible for leaking the document later resigned.*

5.6 test yourself

Complete each sentence with the present or past participle of one of the verbs in the box.

consist arise use base cause give

- 1 A key issue _____ from the report is the extent to which politicians put undue pressure on civil servants.
- 2 The speech on race _____ by Barack Obama in Philadelphia is considered to be one of his best.
- 3 Peterson describes some of the innovative techniques _____ by Monet to capture light in his paintings.
- 4 In his article, Ichikawa discusses five recent films _____ on computer games.
- 5 *Paradoxes* was an art installation _____ of eight individual paintings and sculptures.
- 6 Coughs _____ by viral infections usually disappear within a few days.