

**RELATIVE CLAUSES: DEFINING AND NON-DEFINING**

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**Annotation:** This article discusses about defining and non-defining relative clauses, their differences, how to use correctly in a sentence and exceptional cases. The information about the topic is explained in a very clear and simple way.

**Key words:** Defining relative clause, non-defining relative clause, who, that, which, whose, whom, where, pronoun, noun, information, subject, object, commas.

**Introduction:** "Since we have set ourselves the goal of building a competitive country, from now on school, lyceum, college and university graduates must know at least 2 foreign languages perfectly. This strict requirement should become the main criterion for the activity of the head of every educational institution," said Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

**Methodology:** Relative clauses are dependent clauses which define or explain a noun. They are not the most simple English grammatical construction, and most students don't tackle them until they are advanced in their English studies. Relative clauses, however, shouldn't be left to the very end of a student's grammar curriculum. They are useful and helpful for students who still have a lot to learn when it comes to English, and these dependent clauses don't have to be that complicated.

◆ **Defining relative clause**

We use defining relative clause to give essential information about someone or something - information that we need in order to understand what or who is being referred to.

**E.g.** I like the baby **who lives next door**.

(If I don't say "who lives next door" then we don't know which baby I mean).

**A non-defining relative clause** gives us extra information about something. We don't need this information to understand the sentence.

**E.g.** I live in London, which has some fantastic parks.

(Everybody knows where London is, so "which has some fantastic parks" is extra information).

Use defining relative clauses to give information about a noun in a sentence. The listener or reader **needs** this information to understand the sentence.

**E.g.** A doctor is a person **who cures sick people**.

The girl **who sits next to me at work** has a bag just like yours.

We usually use a relative pronoun (e.g. who, that, which, whose and whom) to introduce a defining relative clause.

- Use **who** to give more information about a person.

They're the people **who want to buy our house**.

- Use **which** or **that** to give more information about a thing.

A corkscrew is a thing **which you use to open bottles**.

The book **that you gave me for my birthday** is really interesting.

- Use **where** to give more information about a place.

The town **where my uncle lives** is a few miles from here.

**In writing, we don't use commas in defining relative clauses:**

This is a man who takes his responsibilities seriously.

Not: ~~This a man, who takes his responsibilities seriously.~~

**✓If the noun which the relative clause describes is the Object of the sentence, you can delete which, that or who.**

**E.g.** The man **who is wearing the blue suit** is my brother.

**The man is the subject of the sentence. You can't delete who.**

**E.g.** The man **(who) George is talking to** is my brother.

George is **the subject** of the sentence.

The man is **the object** of the sentence.

**So you can delete who.**

**E.g.** The book **which is on the table** is really good.

The book is **the subject** of the sentence. **Which/that is necessary.**

**E.g.** The book **(which/that) you lent me** is really good.

The book is **the object** of the sentence. **Which/that is not necessary.**

#### ◆ Non-defining relative clause

**Non-defining relative clauses tell us more about someone or something, but the information in these clauses doesn't help us to define what we are talking about.**

We always use a relative pronoun or adverb to start a non-defining relative clause: who, which, whose, when or where (**but not that**).

⊖ **We never use the relative pronoun "that" in non-defining relative clauses. We also use commas to separate the clause from the rest of the sentence.**

**E.g.** My friend John, **who went to the same school as me**, has just written a best selling novel.

Clare's mother, **who lives in Berlin**, has 6 grandchildren.

We stopped at the museum, **which we had never visited before**.

I've just come back from Paris, **where Ann lives**.

Yesterday I met a man named Michael, **whose book had been sold 3000\$**.

We can use **who** to talk about people, **which** to talk about things and **whose** to refer to the person or thing that something belongs to.

**E.g.** Yesterday I met my new boss, **who was very nice**.

The house, **which is very big**, is also very cold.

My next door neighbour, **whose children go to school with ours**, has just bought a new car.

**Never use "that" in non-defining relative clauses:**

**Right:** Mr.Smith, who works with me, has invited me to a party.✓

**Wrong:** Mr.Smith, that works with me, has invited me to a party.✗

**Right:** He gave me the cake, which I ate immediately.✓

**Wrong:** He gave me the cake, that I ate immediately.✗

**We only use "that" in defining relative clauses.**

### ▶ □ The Difference: Defining & Non-defining relative clauses

→ □ In defining relative clauses, the pronouns who, whom, and which are often replaced by that.

→ □ In non-defining relative clauses, you cannot replace other pronouns with that.

→ □ You also cannot leave out the relative pronoun in non-defining relative clauses, in the way you sometimes can in defining relative clauses. The relative pronoun is required, even when it is the object of the verb in the relative clause.

→ □ Non-defining relative clauses are always separated from the rest of the sentence by commas, unlike defining relative clauses, which have no punctuation.

▪ He gave me the letter **which was in a blue envelope**.

**(Non-defining clause:** There was only one letter. The letter was in a blue envelope.)

- He gave me the letter **which/that was in a blue envelope.**

**(Defining clause:** There were several letters of different colours and he gave me the blue one. Which may be replaced by **that**. The commas are removed.)

- He gave me the letter, **which I read immediately.**

**(Non-defining clause:** There was only one letter, which is the object of read, but it still must be included in the sentence.)

| Defining relative clauses  | Non-defining relative clauses   |
|--|---|
| <b>No commas</b>   | <b>Between commas</b>   |
| <p><b>Necessary information: essential to distinguish which person or thing we are talking about.</b></p> <p>I called my sister who lives in Samarkand.<br/>(I have 2 sisters and I called the one who lives in Samarkand)</p>   | <p><b>Extra information: not necessary to distinguish which thing or person we are talking about.</b></p> <p>My brother, who lives in Tashkent, is calling me.<br/>(I have only one brother and I am giving additional information that he lives in Tashkent)</p> |
| <b>We can use "that"</b>   | <b>We can not use "that"</b>  |
| <p>We can use <b>that</b> instead of <b>who, which</b>.</p> <p>My sister <b>who studies at the University</b> is a very kind woman. = My sister <b>that studies at the University</b> is a very kind woman.</p> <p>The telephone <b>which is on the table</b> belongs to me =<br/>The telephone <b>that is on the table</b> belongs to me.</p> | <p>We can not use <b>that</b> instead of <b>who, which</b>.</p> <p>My brother, who works in Russia, is a very kind man.</p> <p>The telephone, which is on the table, belongs to me.</p>   |

**In conclusion**

The topic of the relative clauses in English is very comprehensive. In this article, we briefly touched the essential parts of the clauses, their usage in writing and spoken language and also how they differ from each other. I believe that this information will serve as a great source of knowledge for everyone.

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