

How to Form Relative Clauses

Imagine, a girl is talking to Tom. You want to know who she is and ask a friend if he knows her. You could say:

A girl is talking to Tom. Do you know the girl?

That sounds rather complicated, doesn't it? It would be easier with a relative clause: you put both pieces of information into one sentence. Start with the most important thing – you want to know who the girl is.

Do you know the girl ...

As your friend cannot know which girl you are talking about, you need to put in the additional information – the girl is talking to Tom. Use "the girl" only in the first part of the sentence, in the second part replace it with the relative pronoun (for people, use the relative pronoun "who"). So the final sentence is:

Do you know the girl who is talking to Tom?

Relative Pronouns

relative pronoun	USE	EXAMPLE
who	for people	I told you about the woman <i>who</i> lives next door.
which	for animals and things referring to a whole sentence	Do you see the cat <i>which</i> is lying on the roof? He couldn't read <i>which</i> surprised me.
whose	possession for people, animals and things	Do you know the boy <i>whose</i> mother is a nurse?
whom	very formal object pronoun for people,	It was invited by the professor <i>whom</i> I met at the conference.
that	pronoun for people, animals and things <u>in defining relative clauses</u> (<i>who</i> or <i>which</i> are also possible)	I don't like the table <i>that</i> stands in the kitchen.

RELATIVE ADVERB	MEANING	USE	EXAMPLE
when	in/on which	refers to a time expression	the day <i>when</i> we met him
where	in/at which	refers to a place	the place <i>where</i> we met him
why	for which	refers to a reason	the reason <i>why</i> we met him

Subject Pronoun or Object Pronoun?

Subject and object pronouns cannot be distinguished by their forms - **who, which, that** are used for subject and object pronouns.

You can, however, distinguish them as follows:

If the relative pronoun is followed by a verb, the relative pronoun is a *subject pronoun*. Subject pronouns must always be used.

The apple which is lying on the table

If the relative pronoun is not followed by a verb (but by a noun or pronoun), the relative pronoun is an *object pronoun*. Object pronouns can be dropped in defining relative clauses,

The apple (which) George lays on the table

Defining Relative Clauses

Defining relative clauses (also called *identifying relative clauses* or *restrictive relative clauses*) give **detailed information defining a general term or expression**.

Defining relative clauses are not put in commas.

Imagine, Tom is in a room with five girls. One girl is talking to Tom and you ask somebody if he knows this girl. Here the relative clause defines which of the five girls you mean.

Do you know the girl who is talking to Tom?

Defining relative clauses are often used in definitions.

A seaman is someone who works on a ship.

Object pronouns in defining relative clauses can be dropped.

The boy (who/whom) we met yesterday is very nice.

Non-Defining Relative Clauses

Non-defining relative clauses (also called *non-identifying relative clauses* or *non-restrictive relative clauses*) give **additional information** on something, but do not define it.

Non-defining relative clauses are put in commas.

Imagine, Tom is in a room with only one girl. The two are talking to each other and you ask somebody if he knows this girl. Here the relative clause is non-defining because in this situation it is obvious which girl you mean.

Do you know the girl, who is talking to Tom?

Note: In non-defining relative clauses, *who/which* may not be replaced with *that*.

Object pronouns in non-defining relative clauses must be used.

Jim, who/whom we met yesterday, is very nice.