

UNIT 8

8.1 Introduction to relative clauses

It is important to understand the difference between two kinds of relative clauses.

- 1 Defining relative (DR) clauses qualify a noun, and tell us exactly which person or thing is being referred to.

*She likes people **who are good fun to be with**.*

*Children **who tell lies** are odious.*

*A secateurs is a thing **you use to prune roses**.*

She likes people on its own doesn't mean very much; we need to know which people she likes.

who tell lies tells us exactly which children are odious. Without it, the speaker is saying that all children are odious.

A secateurs is a thing doesn't make sense on its own.

- 2 Non-defining relative (NDR) clauses add secondary information to a sentence, almost as an afterthought.

*My friend Andrew, **who is Scottish**, plays the bagpipes.*

*Children, **who tell lies**, are odious.*

*My favourite building is the university library, **which is surrounded by fountains**.*

My friend Andrew is clearly defined. We don't need to know which Andrew is being discussed. The clause *who is Scottish* gives us extra information about him.

The clause *who tell lies* suggests that all children tell lies. It isn't necessary to identify only those that deceive – they all do!

My favourite building is clearly defined. The following clause simply tells us something extra.

- 3 DR clauses are much more common in the spoken language, and NDR clauses are more common in the written language. In the spoken language, we can avoid a NDR clause.

My friend Andrew plays the bagpipes. He's Scottish, by the way.

- 4 When we speak, there is no pause before or after a DR clause, and no commas when we write. With NDR clauses, there are commas before and after, and pauses when we speak.

I like the things you say to me. (No commas, no pauses)

My aunt (pause), who has been a widow for twenty years (pause), loves travelling.

Defining relative clauses

- 1 Notice how we can leave out the relative pronoun if it is the object of the relative clause. This is very common.

Pronoun left out

Did you like the present () I gave you?

Who was that man () you were talking to?

The thing () I like about Dave is his sense of humour.

- 2 We cannot leave out the pronoun if it is the subject of the clause.

Pronoun not left out

*I met a man **who** works in advertising.*

*I'll lend you the book **that** changed my life.*

*The thing **that** helped me most was knowing I wasn't alone.*

- 3 Here are the possible pronouns. The words in brackets are possible, but not as common. ____ means 'nothing'.

	Person	Thing
Subject	who (that)	that (which)
Object	____ (that)	____ (that)

Notes

- *That* is preferred to *which* after superlatives, and words such as *all*, *every(thing)*, *some(thing)*, *any(thing)*, and *only*.
*That's the **funniest** film **that** was ever made.*
*All **that's** left is a few slices of cheese.*
*Give me **something that'll** take away the pain.*
*He's good at **any** sport **that** is played with a ball.*
*The **only** thing **that'll** help you is rest.*
- *That* is also preferred after *it is* ...
*It is a film **that** will be very popular.*
- Prepositions usually come at the end of the relative clause.
*Come and meet the people I work **with**.*
*This is the book I was telling you **about**.*
*She's a friend I can always rely **on**.*

Non-defining relative clauses

- 1 Relative pronouns cannot be left out of NDR clauses.

Relative pronoun as subject

*Paul Jennings, **who** has written several books, addressed the meeting.*

*His last book, **which** received a lot of praise, has been a great success.*

Relative pronoun as object

*Paul Jennings, **who** I knew at university, addressed the meeting.*

*His last book, **which** I couldn't understand at all, has been a great success.*

- 2 Look at the possible pronouns. *Whom* is possible, but not as common.

	Person	Thing
Subject	..., who, which ...
Object	..., who (whom), which ...

Note

Prepositions can come at the end of the clause.

*He talked about theories of market forces, **which** I'd never even heard of.*

In a more formal written style, prepositions come before the pronoun.
The privatization of railways, to which the present government is committed, is not universally popular.

which

Which can be used in NDR clauses to refer to the whole of the sentence before.

She arrived on time, which amazed everybody.

He gave away all his money, which I thought was ridiculous.

The coffee machine isn't working, which means we can't have any coffee.

whose

Whose can be used in both DR clauses and NDR clauses.

That's the woman whose son was killed recently.

My parents, whose only interest is gardening, never go away on holiday.

what

What is used in DR clauses to mean *the thing that*.

Has she told you what's worrying her?

What I need to know is where we're meeting.

why, when, where

1 *Why* can be used in DR clauses to mean *the reason why*.

I don't know why we're arguing.

2 *When* and *where* can be used in DR clauses and NDR clauses.

Tell me when you expect to arrive.

The hotel where we stayed was excellent.

We go walking on Mondays, when the rest of the world is working.

He works in Oxford, where my sister lives.

8.2 Participles

1 When present participles (-ing) are used like adjectives or adverbs, they are active in meaning.

Modern art is interesting.

Pour boiling water onto the pasta.

She sat in the corner crying.

2 When past participles (-ed) are used like adjectives or adverbs, they are passive in meaning.

I'm interested in modern art.

Look at that broken doll.

He sat in his chair, filled with horror at what he had just seen.

3 Participles after a noun define and identify in the same way as relative clauses.

I met a woman riding a donkey. (= who was riding ...)

The car stolen in the night was later found abandoned. (= that was stolen ...)

4 Participles can be used as adverbs. They can describe:

• two actions happening at the same time.

She sat by the fire reading a book.

• two actions that happen one after another.

Opening his case, he took out a gun.

If it is important to show that the first action is completed before the second action begins, we use the perfect participle.

Having finished lunch, we set off on our journey.

Having had a shower, she got dressed.

• two actions that happen one because of another.

Being mean, he never bought anyone a present.

Not knowing what to do, I waited patiently.

5 Many verbs are followed by -ing forms.

I spent the holiday reading.

Don't waste time thinking about the past.

Let's go swimming.

He keeps on asking me the same question.

TEST YOUR GRAMMAR

1 Complete the sentences with one of the relative pronouns.

who which where what when whose

- 1 The man who you met was my brother.
- 2 My other brother, who lives in London, is a teacher.
- 3 He suddenly decided to give up teaching, which came as a bit of a shock.
- 4 He says that what he wants to do is move to Australia.
- 5 His wife, whose parents live in Melbourne, is delighted.
- 6 They don't know exactly where or when they are going.
- 7 Their flat, which they bought only last year, is up for sale.
- 8 The flat which I want to buy is in Acacia Avenue.

2 In which sentences can the relative pronoun be replaced by *that*?

3 Underline the present and past participles in these sentences.

Rewrite them with relative pronouns.

- 1 The woman standing next to him is his wife.
- 2 Most TVs sold in the UK are imported models.

5 Complete each pair of sentences with the correct form of the verb, once as a present participle (-ing) and once as a past participle.

1 I hurt my leg playing football.

Tennis is a sport played by two or four people.

2 It says made in Korea on my camera.

I have a job in a café making sandwiches.

3 I've spent the whole morning writing an essay.

On the wall was some graffiti written in big letters.

4 Goods bought in the sales cannot be refunded.

I've spent all my money buying presents.

5 The police caught the burglar breaking into a house.

Careful! There's a lot of broken glass on the floor.

Extreme adjectives

Work with a partner.

- 1 Look at the adjectives in the box.
Find some with similar meanings.

good bad marvellous huge nice
wet clever enormous fabulous
excited surprised valuable small
silly funny interesting thrilled
delighted priceless amazed tiny
hilarious wonderful fantastic
ridiculous awful brilliant pleased
fascinating gorgeous big soaking
excellent beautiful

Which adjectives go with which of these adverbs? Why?

very **absolutely**

- 2 Complete the conversations with suitable adverbs and adjectives. Practise them with your partner.

1 A Did you get very wet in that shower?
B Shower! It was a downpour. We're *absolutely soaking*

2 A I bet you were quite excited when your team won.
B Excited! We were *absolutely* ...! *thrilled*

3 A I thought she looked rather silly in that flowery hat, didn't you?
B Silly! She looked *absolutely* ...! *ridiculous*

4 A Come on, nobody'll notice that tiny spot on your nose.
B They will, I just know they will! It's *absolutely* ...! *enormous*

5 A I thought the latest Tom Cruise film was absolutely hilarious. *quite funny*
B Mmm. I wouldn't say that. It was ... but not hilarious.

6 A Len left early. He wasn't feeling well.
B I'm not surprised. When I saw him this morning he looked *absolutely* ...! *awful*