

University of Tikrit
College of Education for Humanities
English Department
First Stage
English Grammar



Relative Clauses

By

Asst. Inst. Taghreed Saleem Ibraheem

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What are relative clauses?

Relative clauses are parts of a sentence that give extra information about something.

They help us add details without starting a new sentence.

-They have a subject and a verb

-But they cannot stand alone as a full sentence

-They usually describe a noun (like an adjective)

Example:

I want a pizza that is very spicy.

→ “that is very spicy” gives more information about the pizza.

Relative pronouns: (that, which, who, whom and whose)

Relative adverbs: where (place), when (time) and why (reason)

Who vs Whom

Who → subject (does the action) and in informal speech.

Examples:

-The girl ordered pizza. She is here → The girl who ordered pizza is here.

-The girl is speaking. She is my friend → The girl who is speaking is my friend.

-The man called you. He is here → The man who called you is here.

-The man owns the shop. He is kind → The man who owns the shop is kind

Whom → object (receives the action, after preposition) and in formal speech.

-The person whom you met is my teacher → The person whom you met is my teacher

- The girl I called. She didn't answer → The girl whom I called didn't answer.

- The boy gave the pizza to someone. He thought that person had ordered it. → The boy gave the pizza *to whom* he thought ordered it.

That vs Which

That → used for things, no commas (important information to identify the noun)

Which → used for things, with commas (extra information)

We use "that" when the clause gives necessary information. Without it, the meaning is incomplete.

Examples:

-The book I borrowed. It is interesting → The book *that* I borrowed is interesting

-The book I borrowed yesterday. It is interesting → The book, which I borrowed yesterday, is interesting

-The pizza is spicy. It is mine → The pizza *that* is spicy is mine (important info)

-The pizza is spicy, is mine → The pizza, which is spicy, is mine (extra info)

Exercises:

-The house -----I grew up in has been sold.

-My car, -----I bought last year, is already having problems.

-The students -----studied hard passed the exam.

-The book, ----- is on the table, belongs to me.

-The movie -----we watched last night was boring

Whose

Shows possession (ownership), used for people

Example:

-I met the man. His car was stolen → I met the man *whose* car was stolen →

- The girl is crying. Her bag is lost → I met the man *whose* car was stolen →

Relative Adverbs

Where → place

When → time

Why → reason

Examples:

- This is the place. We met in this place → This is the place where we met.

-I remember the day. We met on that day → I remember the day when we met.

-I don't know the reason. She left for that reason → I don't know the reason why she left.

Types of Relative Clauses

1. Restrictive or Defining Clauses (Important)

Give essential information

No commas

Example:

The student who studies hard will succeed.

2. Nonrestrictive or non-defining Clauses (Extra Info)

Give extra information

Use commas

Example:

My teacher, who is very kind, helped me.