Relative Pronouns and Clauses

Relative Clauses

- Used to link information to prevent short, repetitive sentences.
- Used to describe, or give information about, the nouns that precede them.
- They are started with relative pronouns.
- Example - The sports car that is next to the blue car has new tires.
- Example - Our new teacher, who used to live in Australia, speaks seven languages.

Defining Relative Clauses

- Provide essential information
- Do not use commas
- Give a defining description to the noun
- They answer the question: “Which one?”
- Example - The pizzeria is closing. Which one? The one that serves sushi pizza is closing.

Non-Defining Relative Clause

- Provide extra, non essential information
- Uses commas
- Example - The programmer, who is vegetarian, starts on Monday.

Relative Pronouns

Who

Used to connect two different sentences about the same person.

Example - Jessica lives with Erica. Jessica studies biology.

- Jessica, who lives with Erica, studies biology.
- Who = replaces ‘Jessica’.
- Who lives with Erica = Non-Defining Relative Clause.

Which

Used to connect things.

Example - The house has just sold. The house was built in 1798.

- The house, which was built in 1798, had just sold.
- Which = replaces ‘The house’.
- Which was built in 1798 = Non-Defining Relative Clause.

That

Used to connect:

- People
- Things
- Places

Example - We bought the computer. The computer was on sale.

- We bought the computer that was on sale.
- That = replaces ‘The computer’.
- That was on sale = Defining relative clause.

Where

Used to connect two different sentences about the same place.

Example - I want to visit Berlin. My brother lives in Berlin.

- I want to visit Berlin where my brother lives.
- Where = replaces ‘in Berlin’.
- Where my brother lives = Defining Relative Clause.

When

Used to connect two different sentences about the same time period.

Example - Let’s go fishing in June. My school ends in June.

- Let’s go fishing in June, when my school ends.
- When = replaces ‘my school’.
- When my school ends = Non-Defining Relative Clause.

Important to remember

When the relative pronoun functions as the object of the sentence, it can be omitted without compromising the meaning of the sentence.

Example 1

- The woman who I met on the train lives in Portugal.
- The woman I met on the train lives in Portugal.
- Who = Relative pronoun.
- Who = Functions as the object.
- Who = Can be omitted.

Example 2

- The woman who took the train with me lives in Portugal.
- The woman who took the train with me lives in Portugal.
- Who = Relative Pronoun.
- Who = Functions as the subject.

- Who = Can NOT be omitted.