

## GRAMMAR

## Restrictive & Nonrestrictive Clauses

A relative clause starts with a relative pronoun. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun previously used in the discussion. Words such as *he/she/it* or *him/her/they/them/we/us* are pronouns because they are used to replace a noun previously used in the sentence or another pronoun that was used before them.

Relative clauses replace and explain the noun that precedes or follows them. They open with a relative pronoun: *who, which, that, whom* or *whose*.

A relative pronoun explains the noun modified by a relative clause. It introduces a relative clause.

### Examples:

- The man **who called you** is my yoga instructor.
- The girl **that called you** wants to meet you tomorrow.
- The car **which hit the tree** was also hit from behind by a truck.
- The girl **whom you met** there is my roommate.
- The student **whose phone rings in class** must stand up and apologize.
- My brother **whose phone just rang** is a geology doctor.

*Who, that, and which* are subjects of the verb that follows them.

*Whom* is the object of the verb that comes after it in the sentence.

*Whose* indicates possession; the noun that precedes it possesses the object that follows it.



## Restrictive Relative Clauses

A relative clause is defining when its input is necessary to understand the noun it explains; without it, the noun does not make much sense.

*Examples:*

- The woman **who lives across the street** watches my cat when I go on vacation.
- The person **whom I called today** was my high school teacher.
- The car **that hit the cat** was red and yellow.
- The school **whose Writing Center we are visiting** is really impressive.

Restrictive clauses are necessary, so they do not use any punctuation to set them off from the noun they are modifying.

*Who* is only used for people and replaces subject nouns.

*Whom* is only used for people and replaces object nouns.

*That* is used for places, things, and ideas.

*Whose* is used for people, places, things, and ideas.

## Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses

A relative clause is non-defining when it can be deleted without affecting the meaning of the sentence; in this case it should be surrounded by commas.

*Examples:*

- Ms. Johnson, **who is very beautiful**, is a smart teacher.
- The plumber, **whom I called this morning**, is already here!
- The car, **which I was driving in my senior year**, caught fire on I-35 in Missouri.
- The car, **whose driver jumped out before the accident**, was completely destroyed.

Nonrestrictive clauses are not necessary, so they are placed within commas to set them off from the noun they are modifying.

*Who* is only used for people and replaces subject nouns.

*Whom* is only used for people and replaces object nouns.

*Which* is used for places, things, and ideas.

*Whose* is used for people, places, things, and ideas.