

## RELATIVE CLAUSES

Relative clauses give us information about the person or thing mentioned.

**Defining relative clauses** give us *essential* information – information that tells us who or what we are talking about.

The woman **who lives next door** works in a bank.  
These are the flights **that have been cancelled**.

We usually use a relative pronoun or adverb to start a defining relative clause: *who, which, that, when, where* or *whose*.

### **who/that**

We can use *who* or *that* to talk about people. *That* is a bit more informal.

She's the woman **who** cuts my hair.  
He's the man **that** I met at the conference.

### **which/that**

We can use *which* or *that* to talk about things. *That* a bit more informal.

There was a one-year guarantee **which** came with the TV.  
The laptop **that** I bought last week has started making a strange noise!

**when** can refer to a time.

Summer is the season **when** I'm happiest.

**where** can refer to a place.

That's the stadium **where** Real Madrid play.

**whose** refers to the person that something belongs to.

He's a musician **whose** albums have sold millions.

## Omitting the relative pronoun

Sometimes we can leave out the relative pronoun. For example, we can usually leave out *who, which* or *that* if it is followed by a subject.

The assistant [that] **we** met was really kind.  
(*we* = subject, can omit *that*)

We can't usually leave it out if it is followed by a verb.

The assistant that **helped** us was really kind.  
(*helped* = verb, can't omit *that*)

**Non-defining relative clauses** give us *extra* information about someone or something. It isn't essential for understanding who or what we are talking about.

*My grandfather, **who's 87**, goes swimming every day.*

*The house, **which was built in 1883**, has just been opened to the public.*

*The award was given to Sara, **whose short story impressed the judges**.*

We always use a relative pronoun or adverb to start a non-defining relative clause: *who*, *which*, *whose*, *when* or *where* (but not *that*). We also use commas to separate the clause from the rest of the sentence.

## **who, which and whose**

We can use *who* to talk about people, *which* to talk about things and *whose* to refer to the person or thing that something belongs to.

*Yesterday I met my new boss, **who** was very nice.*

*The house, **which** is very big, is also very cold!*

*My next-door neighbour, **whose** children go to school with ours, has just bought a new car.*

*After the port there is a row of fisherman's houses, **whose** lights can be seen from across the bay.*

## **Places and times**

We can use *when* to talk about time. We use *where* to talk about places and times.

*City Park, **where** we used to go, has been closed down.*

*December, **when** Christmas is celebrated, is a summer month for the southern hemisphere.*