

SECTION 18 relative pronouns

● grammar summary

who	(whom)	which	that	what
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We use **relative pronouns** to join sentences to nouns.

The man was Welsh. **He** won the prize.

The man **who** won the prize was Welsh.

We use **who** for people and **which** for things: We can also use **that** for people and things.

There's the man **who/that** sold me my bike.

She said a word **which/that** I didn't hear.

We often leave out **object pronouns**.

Do you remember those photos **(that)** I showed you?

Prepositions can often go in two places.

The woman **about whom** we were talking walked into the room. (formal)

The woman **that** we were talking about walked into the room. (conversational)

We can use **what** to mean 'the thing(s) which'.

The children always eat **what** I cook.

● pre-test: which units do you need?

Try this small test. It will help you to decide which units you need. The answers are on page 284.

⑪ Correct (✓) or not (X)?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>► We stayed in a hotel who had a beautiful garden. X</p> <p>1 I didn't like the man which my sister married. ...</p> <p>2 Did I tell you about the film which we saw? ...</p> <p>3 Eric said a word which I couldn't understand it. ...</p> | <p>4 People that live in London are called 'Londoners'. ...</p> <p>5 Is the book you're reading interesting? ...</p> <p>6 I'm spending the day with some people I know. ...</p> <p>7 The people came to dinner stayed very late. ...</p> <p>8 The girl I work with gave me some flowers. ...</p> <p>9 I don't believe anything what she says. ...</p> <p>10 Have you got what you need? ...</p> |
|---|---|

art·ist /'ɑ:tɪst; AmE 'ɑ:t-/ **noun** 1 a person who creates works of art, especially paintings or drawings: *an exhib*

bee /bi:/ **noun** 1 a black and yellow flying insect that can sting. Bees live in large groups and make HONEY (=

builder **noun** 1 a person who builds things, esp one whose job is building houses, etc. 2 (in compounds) a person who

burg·lar /'bɜ:glə(r); AmE 'bɜ:rg-/ **noun** a person who enters a building illegally in order to steal ⇨ note at

bus /bʌs/ **noun** (pl **buses**, US also **busses**) a large vehicle that carries passengers, esp one that travels along a fixed route, stopping

cheese /tʃi:z/ **noun** 1 [U, C] a type of food made from milk that can be either soft or hard and is usually white or yellow in colour; a particu

plant¹ /plɑ:nt, US plɑ:nt/ **noun** 1 [C] a type of living thing that grows in the earth and usu has a stem, leaves and roots:

sau·cer /'sɔ:sə(r)/ **noun** a small shallow round dish that a cup stands on; an object that is shaped like this:

(Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

relative *who* and *which* *the keys which I lost*

We can use **sentences** to **describe nouns**.

To join sentences to nouns, we use **relative pronouns**: *who* (for people) and *which* (for things).

The man plays golf. **(He)** lives at No 10.

The man **(who)** lives at No 10 plays golf.

The letter is for me. You saw **(it)**.

The letter **(which)** you saw is for me.

I like the girl. **(She)** works with Ann.

I like the girl **(who)** works with Ann.

I've got those books. You wanted **(them)**.

I've got those books **(which)** you wanted.

1 Put in *who* or *which*.

- 1 The people live downstairs are Irish.
- 2 The shop sells that good bread is closed today.
- 3 The dictionary I bought yesterday isn't very good.
- 4 That cheese you like comes from Scotland.
- 5 Do you know the girls are standing by the window?
- 6 I can't find the key opens this door.
- 7 I've lost the ear-rings Harry gave me.
- 8 The police are looking for three men robbed the National Bank yesterday.
- 9 We know the woman teaches French at Jane's school.

We use *who* or *which* instead of *he*, *him*, *she*, *it* etc. **Don't use both.**

The woman *who* ~~she~~ teaches me French is ill. Here's the address *which* you wanted ~~it~~.

2 Circle the correct answer.

- 1 There's the man who *took* / *he took* your coat.
- 2 Do you know the people who *live* / *they live* next door?
- 3 I like that woman; *she is* / *is* very kind.
- 4 I've found the keys which I *lost* / *lost them*.
- 5 Do you like the new dress which I *bought* / *bought it* yesterday?
- 6 The car which *is parked* / *it is parked* outside belongs to Susan.
- 7 This is a new kind of knife: *cuts* / *it cuts* everything.
- 8 The poems which Mark *writes* / *writes them* are very hard to understand.

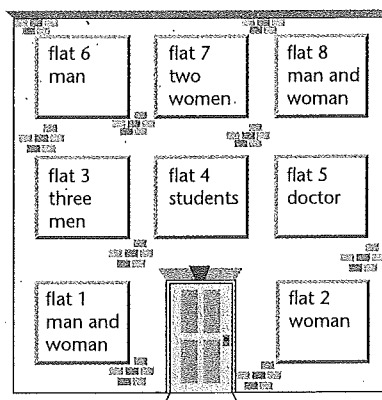
The man who makes no mistakes
does not usually make anything.
(E J Phelps)

3 Look at the picture and the information, and write sentences with **who**.

► The man and woman who live in flat 8 are from Scotland.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

FLAT	INFORMATION
1	play loud music all night
2	broke her leg skiing
3	play golf all day
4	haven't got much money
5	has three children
6	drives a Rolls-Royce
7	are hiding from the police
8	are from Scotland



4 Join the sentences in the place marked *. Change **he, it** etc to **who** or **which**.

► Most of the people* speak German. They live in Austria.

Most of the people who live in Austria speak German.

► I know a shop*. It sells really good meat.

I know a shop which sells really good meat.

1 The bus* isn't running today. It goes to Oxford.

2 Yesterday I met a man*. He works with your brother.

3 The child* was ill. She didn't come to the party.

4 Can you pick up the papers*? They are lying on the floor.

5 The eggs* were bad. I bought them yesterday.

6 Here's the book*. You asked me to buy it for you.

7 I don't like the man*. He is going out with my sister.

We can use **whom** for people when the relative pronoun is the **object** of the following verb.

*I've just got a postcard from a woman **whom** I met on holiday last year.*

But **whom** is formal and unusual. In spoken English, we more often use **that** (see page 240), **who** or **nothing** (see page 241).

*I've just got a postcard from a woman **who/that** I met on holiday last year.*

OR *I've just got a postcard from a woman I met on holiday last year.*

relative *that* a bird that can't fly

We can use *that* instead of *who* or *which*.

The man *that* lives at number 8 is getting married. You haven't drunk the tea *that* I made for you.

1 Join the sentences in the place marked *, using *that*.

► I'd like to speak to the person*. She wrote this letter.

~~I'd like to speak to the person that wrote this letter.~~

► The tomatoes* are all bad. I bought them yesterday.

~~The tomatoes that I bought yesterday are all bad.~~

1 Joe's got a motorbike*. It can do 200 km an hour.

2 Is that the computer*? It doesn't work.

3 Those are the trousers*. I use them for gardening.

4 A man* wants to marry my sister. He lives in New York.

5 The doctors* all said different things. They looked at my leg.

6 The flowers* are beautiful. You gave them to Aunt Sarah.

7 The children* have gone on holiday. They play football with Paul.

2 GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY: things that fly

Write descriptions with *that*. Use a dictionary if necessary.

can fly straight up flies at night and hears very well
eats small animals and birds can fly to the moon
doesn't make honey and can bite you

can't fly doesn't have an engine
makes honey ✓

► an insect *that makes honey*

1 an insect

2 a bird

3 a bird

4 an animal

5 a machine

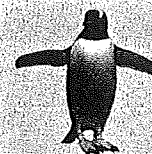
6 a plane

7 a thing



► bee

1 mosquito



2 penguin



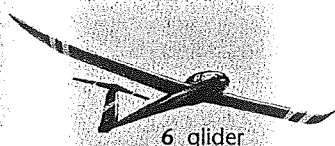
3 eagle



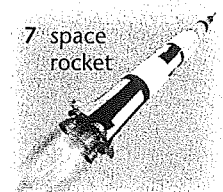
4 bat



5 helicopter



6 glider



7 space rocket

leaving out relative pronouns *the car (that) you bought*

When a relative pronoun (*who/which/that*) is the **object** of the following verb, we often leave it out. But we can't leave out a relative pronoun when it is the **subject** of the following verb.

(*I phoned a man.*)

The man **that** I phoned spoke Spanish.

→ The man I phoned spoke Spanish.

The train **that** you want leaves at 10.00.

→ The train you want leaves at 10.00.

(*A man phoned me.*)

The man **that** phoned me spoke Greek.

(NOT ~~The man phoned me spoke Greek.~~)

The train **that** stops at York goes at 8.00.

(NOT ~~The train stops at York goes at 8.00.~~)

1 Is the relative pronoun the subject (S) or object (O) of the following verb?

▶ the woman **who** wrote this letter ...

▶ the film **that** I saw ...

1 the languages **that** she spoke ...

2 a woman **who** helped me ...

3 a man **who(m)** I helped ...

4 the weather **that** we have had ...

5 a machine **that** makes paper ...

6 that car **which** you bought ...

2 Look at Exercise 1. Find the expressions with object relative pronouns and rewrite them without **who(m)**, **which** or **that**.

▶ the film I saw

1

2

3

4

3 Join the sentences in the place marked * without using **who**, **which** or **that**.

▶ The cup of coffee* is on the table. You wanted it.

The cup of coffee you wanted is on the table.

1 I'm working for a man*. I've known him for twenty years.

.....

2 They played a lot of music*. I didn't like it.

.....

3 The campsite* was very dirty. We found it.

.....

4 I'm going on holiday with some people*. I know them.

.....

5 That book* is very good. You suggested it to me.

.....

6 The ring* belonged to her grandmother. She lost it.

.....

4 Write three sentences beginning **Everybody I know ...**

▶ *Everybody I know likes rock music.*

1

2

3

prepositions *the man that she works for*

Some verbs have prepositions with them (see page 136) – for example *look at*, *listen to*. When relative pronouns are the objects of these verbs, there are **two possibilities**:

- preposition before *whom/which* (very formal)

The woman smiled. I was looking at her. → The woman at whom I was looking smiled.
The flat was dirty. He lived in it. → The flat in which he lived was dirty.

- preposition after verb (more informal; we can leave out *who(m)/which/that*.)

The woman (whom/that) I was looking at smiled. The flat he lived in was dirty.

1 Change these expressions to make them more conversational. Use *that*.

- ▷ a boy with whom I went to school *a boy that I went to school with*
- 1 the girl about whom I was talking
- 2 the people for whom I work
- 3 the house in which I live
- 4 the music to which you are listening
- 5 the bus on which I go to work

2 Rewrite the expressions from Exercise 1, but leave out *that*.

- ▷ *a boy, I went to school with* 3
- 1 4
- 2 5

3 Look at the information about Helen, and then make sentences (like the example) about the people in her life.

Helen lives in a big flat with a friend called Pam. She works for a man called Eric. At weekends she plays tennis with a woman called Monica. Sometimes she reads to an 80-year-old woman called Karen, or baby-sits for people called Ann and Joe. She is in love with a man called Bill.

- ▷ Pam is *the friend she lives with*
- 1 Eric is
- 2 Monica is
- 3 Karen is
- 4 Ann and Joe are
- 5 Bill is

4 Now write sentences (like the example) about Helen's birthday presents.

For Helen's birthday, Pam gave her a handbag, Eric gave her chocolates, Monica gave her a clock, Karen gave her theatre tickets, Ann and Joe gave her a picture, and Bill gave her flowers and ear-rings.

- ▷ The friend she lives *with gave her a handbag*
- 1 The man she works
- 2 The woman
- 3 The 80-year-old woman
- 4 The people
- 5 The man

relative *what* *It was just what I wanted.*

We can use *what* to mean '*the thing(s) which/that*' or '*anything that*'.

Have you got *what* you need for your journey? (= '*... the things that you need ...*')
I'm sorry about *what* happened. 'Can I have something to eat?' 'Take *what* you like.'

We use *what* with a singular verb.

What I bought was mostly very cheap. (NOT ~~*What* I bought were...~~)

1 Change the words in *italics* to *what*.

► *The things that* she said weren't true. *What she said* wasn't true.

- 1 *The things that* he did made everybody angry.
- 2 Take *anything that* you want.
- 3 Soap – that's *the thing that* I forgot to pack!
- 4 She gave me a watch. It was just *the thing that* I wanted.
- 5 That child does *anything that* he likes.
- 6 *The thing that* I need is some food.

2 Write a sentence beginning *What I need is ...*

We use *that*, not *what*, after *anything, something, nothing, everything, all* and *the only thing*.

You can take *anything that* you want. (NOT ... ~~*anything what* you want.~~)

The shop had *nothing that* I wanted. *All that* I could do was stand and watch.

Money is *the only thing* in the world *that* matters to him.

3 Put in *that* or *what*.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 I believe everything she says. | 6 I can't eat everything I like. |
| 2 she did surprised everybody. | 7 The only thing I forgot |
| 3 I can't give you you want. | was toothpaste. |
| 4 He said nothing was important. | 8 Ask Peter – he'll tell you you need |
| 5 I can't eat I like. | to know. |

4 GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY: jewellery

Read the text and complete the sentences. Use a dictionary if necessary.

Ann, Mary, Sally, Jane, Barbara and Helen have all got rich boyfriends. For Christmas, Ann wanted a gold watch, Mary wanted a diamond brooch, Sally wanted sapphire ear-rings, Jane wanted a pearl necklace, Barbara wanted a ruby ring and Helen wanted a silver bracelet. But:

► Ann got a diamond brooch. *Ann got what Mary wanted.*

- 1 Mary got a ruby ring.
- 2 Sally got a silver bracelet.
- 3 Jane got a gold watch.
- 4 Barbara got a pearl necklace.
- 5 Helen got sapphire ear-rings.

test yourself relative pronouns

1 Correct (✓) or not (✗)?

- 1 The people which live next door have got five children. ...
- 2 Do you know a shop who sells good cheese? ...
- 3 I didn't understand the language which she was speaking. ...
- 4 I didn't understand the language that she was speaking. ...
- 5 I've found the dictionary that I lost it yesterday. ...
- 6 The girls that I work with gave me flowers for my birthday. ...
- 7 Where's the paper you wrote the address on? ...
- 8 You can have anything what you like. ...
- 9 What she said made me very angry. ...

2 Join the sentences in the place marked *, using *who* or *which*.

- 1 I know a man*. He writes film music.
.....

- 2 Yesterday I saw a film*. You would like it.
.....

- 3 The bus* got to London twenty minutes late. I took it.
.....

- 4 The car* isn't very good. I bought it last month.
.....

3 Join the sentences in the place marked *, using *that*.

- 1 The tickets* were very expensive. I got them.
.....

- 2 These are the scissors*. I use them for cutting paper.
.....

- 3 The woman* is from Brazil. She gives me tennis lessons.
.....

- 4 The man* is always very friendly. He works in the corner shop.
.....

4 Rewrite the sentences without relative pronouns if you can. If you can't, write 'can't change'.

- ▷ Where's the book which I was reading? Where's the book I was reading?

- ▷ The people who live next door are Italian. can't change

- 1 The clock that I bought doesn't work.

- 2 I didn't like the film which I saw last night.

- 3 Here's the letter that came for you.

- 4 It was a journey that took twelve hours.

5 Change these expressions to make them more conversational.

- 1 a boy to whom I talked

- 2 the people for whom I work

- 3 the hotel in which we stayed

- 4 the place to which I drove