

IES “A NOSA SEÑORA DOS OLLOS GRANDES”
Department of English

JCGL

RELATIVE CLAUSES

There are three types of relative clauses:

1. Restrictive relative clauses.
2. Non-restrictive relative clauses.
3. Sentential relative clauses.

RESTRICTIVE RELATIVE CLAUSES

These clauses describe the head of the preceding noun phrase (NP) in such a way as to distinguish it from other heads of the same class:

The boy who is playing the piano is my brother.

Relative pronouns:

PERSONS

1. Subject: *The boy **who / that** is playing the piano is my brother.*
2. Object: *The girls **Ø / that / who / whom** he employs are always complaining about their pay.*
3. Object of a preposition: *The friend **with whom** I was travelling spoke French.*

*The friend **Ø / that / who / whom** I was travelling **with** spoke French.*

4. Possessive: *The film is about a spy **whose** wife betrays him.*

THINGS

1. Subject: *The stairs **that / which** lead to the cellar are rather slippery.*
2. Object: *The car **Ø / that / which** I rented broke down.*
3. Object of a preposition: *The ladder **on which** I was standing began to slip.*

*The ladder **Ø** / **that** / **which** / I was standing on began to slip.*

4. Possessive: *I've got a house **whose** walls are made of glass.*

NOTE:

1. **ANIMALS.** With antecedents denoting animals both *who* and *which* are possible. **Which** is the default choice, but *who* is by no means uncommon. **Who** conveys a greater degree of personal interest and involvement. The most obvious cases where *who* is used are in references to pets, but it is also found with other creatures.
2. **RELATIVE PRONOUN AND ADVERBIAL.** The relative pronoun can be replaced by special adjunct forms for place, time, and cause:

*She wanted to see the house **where** she had grown up.*

*It happened at a time **when** I was living alone.*

*That's the main reason **why** they won't help us.*

3. **Which** occurs in a few special cases with antecedents denoting human beings:

*They accused him of being a traitor, **which** he undoubtedly was.*

*Remember that they have a house-keeper, **which** we don't have.*

NON-RESTRICTIVE RELATIVE CLAUSES

These clauses are placed after heads which are definite already. They do not therefore define the head, but merely add something to it by giving some more information about it. They are separated from their antecedent by commas. The pronoun can never be omitted, and *that* is extremely uncommon. This construction is rather formal and more common in written than in spoken English:

Peter, who had been driving all day, suggested stopping at the next town.

Relative pronouns:

PERSONS

1. Subject: *My neighbour, **who** is very pessimistic, says there will be no apples this year.*

2. Object: *Peter, **whom** / **who** everyone suspected, turned out to be innocent.*
3. Object of a preposition: *Mr Jones, **for whom** I was working, was a nice man.*

*Mr Jones, **who** / **whom** I was working **for**, was a nice man.*

4. Possessive: *Anne, **whose** children are at school all day, is trying to get a job.*

THINGS

1. Subject: *The 8.15 train, **which** is usually very punctual, was late today.*
2. Object: *These books, **which** you can buy at any bookshop, are very interesting.*
3. Object of a preposition: *His house, **for which** he paid € 500,000, is now worth € 750,000.*

*His house, **which** he paid € 500,000 **for**, is now worth € 750,000.*

4. Possessive: *His house, **whose** windows were all broken, was a depressing sight.*

SENTENTIAL RELATIVE CLAUSES

These clauses have as their antecedent not an NP, but a whole clause or sentence:

He admires Ms Brown, which I find strange.