

What are Relative Clauses?

Worksheet

A relative clause is a clause that modifies a noun. Defining clauses ('The person who won') are essential and have no commas; non-defining clauses ('My brother, who is a doctor,') add extra detail and use commas.

Questions

1. Which sentence uses a defining relative clause?

- A) My book, which is blue, is on the shelf.
- B) The book that you recommended was great.
- C) The Titanic, which sank in 1912, was huge.
- D) My mother, who is a teacher, works hard.

2. Which uses a non-defining relative clause?

- A) The student who arrived late apologized.
- B) The book that I'm reading is long.
- C) Shakespeare, who wrote Hamlet, was English.
- D) The person that won the race was happy.

3. Why should you NOT use 'that' here?: 'My best friend, ___ is a musician, won an award.'

- A) that
- B) who
- C) which
- D) whose

4. What does removing the relative clause do?: 'The restaurant, which serves sushi, is downtown.'

- A) Changes the meaning
- B) Leaves it incomplete
- C) Leaves it complete (the clause was extra)
- D) Makes it a fragment

5. Identify the relative clause and type: 'The employee who submitted the report was promoted.'

6. Identify the relative clause and type: 'My sister, who lives in Paris, is a lawyer.'

7. Identify the relative clause and type: 'The city that we visited last summer was beautiful.'

8. Define: What is a relative clause?

9. Define: Defining vs non-defining — what's the key difference?

10. Define: Can you use 'that' in non-defining clauses?

Answer Key

1. B) The book that you recommended was great. — 'The book that you recommended' is defining — essential to specify which book. No commas needed.
2. C) Shakespeare, who wrote Hamlet, was English. — 'Shakespeare, who wrote Hamlet, was English' — 'who wrote Hamlet' is non-defining, set off by commas. Extra fact, not essential.
3. B) who — Non-defining clauses NEVER use 'that' — use 'who' (for people). Correct: 'My best friend, who is a musician, won an award.'
4. C) Leaves it complete (the clause was extra) — This is non-defining, so removing it leaves the sentence complete: 'The restaurant is downtown.' The clause merely added extra info.
5. Relative clause: 'who submitted the report'. Type: DEFINING (restrictive) — which employee? The one who submitted the report. No commas. Without this clause, the sentence is incomplete — we wouldn't know which employee.
6. Relative clause: 'who lives in Paris'. Type: NON-DEFINING (non-restrictive) — set off by commas. Extra information about my sister. Without this clause, the sentence is still complete: 'My sister is a lawyer.'
7. Relative clause: 'that we visited last summer'. Type: DEFINING — which city? The one we visited last summer. No commas. This clause is essential to specify which city.
8. A clause that modifies a noun by describing or adding information about it. Starts with 'who', 'which', 'that', 'whose', 'when', 'where'.
9. Defining = essential to meaning, no commas ('the book that I like'). Non-defining = extra info, has commas ('my book, which is red').
10. No — non-defining always use 'who', 'which', 'whose', etc. 'My car, which is red' (NOT 'that is red').

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