

What are Defining Relative Clauses?

Worksheet

A defining relative clause is a subordinate clause that identifies or restricts the noun it modifies and cannot be omitted without losing meaning. It uses relative pronouns like who, which, or that and is not separated by commas.

Questions

1. Which is a defining relative clause?

- A) John, who is a doctor, lives here.
- B) The teacher who gave the exam is kind.
- C) My car, which is red, needs repair.
- D) Yesterday, when it rained, I stayed home.

2. Why can't you remove a defining clause?

- A) It's impolite.
- B) The sentence loses meaning.
- C) Commas aren't allowed.
- D) The verb changes tense.

3. Complete: The book __ you lent me was brilliant.

- A) who
- B) which
- C) where
- D) when

4. Defining relative clauses use...

- A) commas around the clause
- B) no commas
- C) only in formal writing
- D) only with 'which'

5. Complete: The student who __ always gets top marks in English.

6. Combine into one sentence with a defining relative clause: I have a book. It was written by Shakespeare.

7. Identify the defining relative clause: The town where I grew up has changed dramatically.

8. Define: What is a defining relative clause?

9. Define: Can you remove a defining clause?

10. Define: Relative pronouns for people?

Answer Key

1. B) The teacher who gave the exam is kind. — Option 2 identifies WHICH teacher (no commas). Options 1 & 3 are non-defining (extra info in commas).
2. B) The sentence loses meaning. — Defining clauses are essential — they answer 'which one?'
3. B) which — which/that for objects; who for people.
4. B) no commas — Defining = NO commas. Non-defining = WITH commas.
5. who = relative pronoun linking to 'student' The clause identifies WHICH student Answer: who studies hard / who attends every class
6. Identify the noun to be restricted: 'book' Use 'that' or 'which': I have a book that was written by Shakespeare. Or: I have a book which was written by Shakespeare.
7. Relative pronoun: 'where' The clause restricts which town: 'where I grew up' Without it: 'The town has changed' (loses meaning)
8. A clause that identifies or restricts a noun — essential to the meaning, no commas, uses who/which/that.
9. No — removing it changes the sentence's meaning.
10. who (subject) or whom (object); that also works.

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