

81 Defining relative clauses

A relative clause is a part of a sentence that gives more information about the subject. A defining, or restrictive, relative clause identifies the subject being talked about.

See also:

Non-defining relative clauses **82**

Other relative structures **83**

81.1 DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

Defining relative clauses, also known as restrictive relative clauses, are used to describe exactly which person or thing the speaker is referring to. Without this information, the meaning of the sentence changes.

Here the defining clause gives essential information about people.



Here the defining clause gives essential information about a thing.



The defining clause can also go in the middle of the main clause.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

I need a television **that works!**



Do you know anyone **who knows how to fix a bike?**



“That” can also be used for people.

He's the actor **that we saw last week.**

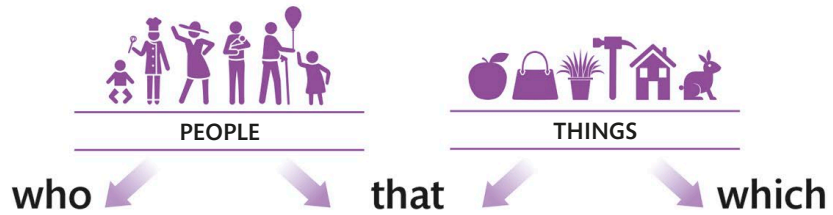


The book **that I just read** is excellent.



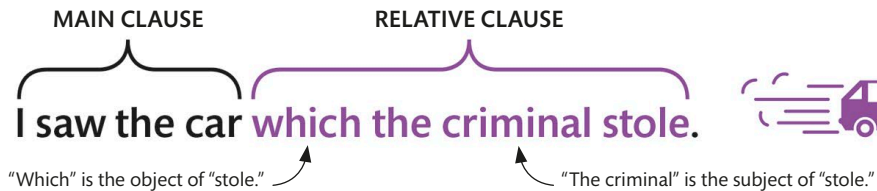
81.2 RELATIVE PRONOUNS

English uses different relative pronouns to talk about people and things.



81.3 SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS IN DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES

Relative clauses are made up of a subject, a verb, and usually an object. They usually start with a relative pronoun, which can be the subject or the object of the relative clause.



HOW TO FORM

If the relative pronoun is the subject of the relative clause, it must appear in the sentence.



If the relative pronoun is the object of the relative clause, it can be left out. "Whom" is sometimes used when a person is the object, but this is very formal.

