

# 83 Other relative structures

Relative words introduce phrases that describe a noun in the main part of the sentence. Different relative words are used to refer to different types of nouns.

See also:  
Singular and plural nouns **69**  
Possession **80**

## 83.1 "WHERE," "WHEN," AND "WHEREBY"

"Where" is the relative word used to refer to a place.

That is the place **where** the judge sits.

[The judge sits there.]



"When" is the relative word used to refer to a time.

He is looking forward to the day **when** he'll be released from prison.

[He's looking forward to the day of his release.]



"Whereby" is the relative word used to refer to a process.

A trial is the process **whereby** a person is found guilty or innocent of a crime.

[To be found guilty, you must go through a trial process.]



## FURTHER EXAMPLES

This is the house **where** Shakespeare was born.



Dean is out at the moment. I'm not sure **where** he is.



I remember the day **when** you were born.



Next month is **when** the new students are starting.



They have an agreement **whereby** they share the company's profits.



There's a new system **whereby** students submit their work online.



## 83.2 "WHOSE"

"Whose" is the relative word used to show possession or belonging.

This is the lawyer **whose** client lied in court.

[This lawyer's client lied in court.]



### FURTHER EXAMPLES

The UK is an example of a country **whose** traffic laws are very strict.



Smith & Smith, **whose** success rate is very high, is a respected law firm.



## 83.3 "WHAT"

"What" is the relative word used to mean "the thing which" or "the things which."

This house is just **what** we were looking for.

[This house is the thing which we were looking for.]



### FURTHER EXAMPLES

I don't know **what** it is, but I'm excited to open it!



These paintings are **what** I've been spending all my time on.



## ! COMMON MISTAKES WORD ORDER WITH RELATIVE STRUCTURES

If a relative structure uses a question word such as "where" or "what," the word order in the clause following this word should be left as normal and should not be formed like a question.

This is just **what we were** looking for. ✓

This is correct.

This is just **what were we** looking for. ✗

Do not invert the subject and verb.

# 84 Question words with “-ever”

Adding “-ever” to question words changes their meaning. These words can be adverbs or determiners in their own clauses, or they can join two clauses together.

See also:

Articles **63** Singular and plural nouns **69**

Adverbs of manner **98**

## 84.1 QUESTION WORDS WITH “-EVER”

Words ending “-ever” are most commonly used to mean “it doesn’t matter what,” “I don’t know,” or to say that the options are unrestricted. They can be used as subjects and objects.



I’m still going to the game, **whatever** the weather’s like.

[It doesn’t matter what the weather is like. I’m still going.]



We can take a taxi or walk, **whichever** you prefer.

[It doesn’t matter to me which you choose, taxi or walking.]

Here, “whichever” is an object.



**Whoever** invented the umbrella was a very clever person.

[I don’t know who invented the umbrella, but they were very clever.]

Here, “whoever” is a subject.



We’ll reschedule for **whenever** the sun comes out next.

[I don’t know when it will be, but we’ll reschedule for the next time it’s sunny.]



I always check the forecast for **wherever** I’m going to be.

[I check the forecast for the place I am going to be, no matter where it is.]



I’m sure you’ll arrive on time, **however** you decide to travel.

[No matter which mode of transportation you choose, I’m sure you’ll be on time.]

## FURTHER EXAMPLES

**Whatever** he tells you,  
just ignore it.



Feel free to call in to see us  
**whenever** you're in town.



**Whichever** you choose, you'll  
have to spend a lot of money.



**Wherever** we end up going this  
summer, I know it'll be great.



**Whoever** did this painting  
is a very talented artist.



**However** he managed to break it,  
I'm not sure we'll be able to fix it.



## 84.2 "WHICHEVER" AND "WHATSOEVER" AS DETERMINERS

"Whichever" and "whatever" can come before nouns to show that the options are unspecified.



I'm sure you'll love **whichever** dog you choose.

[It doesn't matter which dog you choose, you'll love it.]



If you need help for **whatever** reason, just let me know.

[It doesn't matter what the reason is, let me know if you need help.]

## 84.3 OTHER USES OF "WHENEVER" AND "HOWEVER"

"Whenever" can also mean "every time that."



It always seems to rain **whenever** I go away.

[Any time I go away, it rains.]

"However" is often used before an adjective,  
as an adverb, to mean "to whatever extent."



If there's a chance of rain, **however** small, I'll take an umbrella.

[I'll take an umbrella, no matter how small the risk of rain.]