

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

How to use WHO, WHOM, WHICH, and THAT

A relative pronoun is always placed next to the word, phrase, or clause to which it refers in a sentence, except when it is used in a question.

WHO acts as a subject similar to I, HE, SHE, WE, and THEY:

Use it to provide essential information:

- Because the essential information identifies a specific person or people, it is **not separated** from the sentence with commas.
- It cannot be removed from the sentence because it is essential to the meaning of it.
 - The woman **who gave the lecture** is a very good speaker.
 - Pedestrians **who use damaged sidewalks** are in danger.

Use it to provide extra information:

- Because the information is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, it is **always separated** from the sentence with commas
- It can be removed from the sentence because it does not change the meaning of it.
 - My father, **who loves antiques**, collects old books.
 - My grandparents, **who live in Ottawa**, are coming to visit.

Use it in a question when the person's identity is unknown:

- **Who** is arriving today?
- **Who** handed in their assignment early?

Use WHOEVER to identify a person entirely unknown or unspecified:

- **Whoever did this** should be punished.

WHOM acts as a subject similar to ME, HIM, HER, US, and THEM:

Use it to provide essential information:

- Because the essential information identifies a specific person or people, it is **not separated** from the sentence with commas.
- It cannot be removed from the sentence because it is essential to the meaning of it.
 - This is the man to **whom** I spoke.
 - These are the women **whom** we met yesterday.
 - We saw pedestrians **whom were in danger**.

Use it in questions when the person's identity is unknown:

- **Whom** do you see regularly?
- To **whom** did you speak?

Use WHOMEVER to identify a person entirely unknown or unspecified:

- Give it to **whomever** you choose.



RELATIVE PRONOUNS:

continued

WHICH acts as an object similar to IT:

Use it to provide extra information:

- Because the information is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, it is **always separated** from the sentence with commas
- It can be removed from the sentence because it does not change of the meaning of it
 - My car, **which is electric**, is a 2021 model.
 - My bicycle, **which I have owned for years**, was expensive.
 - This book, **which I never liked anyway**, fell apart.

THAT acts as an object similar to HE, SHE, THEM, and IT:

Use it to provide essential information:

- The essential information identifies a specific person or people, thing, or things, so it is not separated from the sentence with commas
- It cannot be removed from the sentence because it is essential to the meaning of the sentence
 - The book **that I read** was very exciting.
 - Sidewalks **that are damaged** are dangerous to pedestrians.
 - The people **that I met yesterday** live in Sweden.
 - The boy **that is playing basketball** is our neighbor.

For more information, contact the Academic Skills Centre (ASC).