

# Defining and non-defining relative clauses

**Defining relative clauses** introduce essential information to identify people, things or places.

## Example:

Is that the boy **who/that** lost his wallet?

[Who/that for people]

The book **which/ that** I read is very interesting

[which/ that for things]

That's the university **where** I studied.

[where for places]

That's the lady **whose** daughter became famous

[whose to express  
possession]

When the relative pronoun **who/ that/ which** IS NOT the subject of the relative clause, it can be omitted;

**Example:** The boy (who/that) I met in London is called John.

The film (which/ that) I saw yesterday was very long.

When **who** is the object of the sentence it becomes **whom**, but it's usually omitted or it is used only in very formal language ( *To whom it may concern...*)

**Example:** It was the same boy (whom) I met yesterday.

When there is a **preposition** in a relative clause, this usually goes at the end of the sentence.

**Example:**            That's the waiter (who) I gave the money to.  
                          This is the film (which) I was telling you about.  
                          That's the country where he comes from.

**Non-defining relative clauses** give additional information about people, things or places. It's usually between commas. We don't use that in non-defining relative clauses but only **who** (for people), **which** (for things), **whose** (possession), and **where** (places).

**Example:**            Paul, who started singing at 15, is now very famous.  
                          John's guitar, which he bought in the sixties, is now worth a lot of money.  
                          London, where I lived 20 years ago, has now got a different skyline.  
                          Jane, whose father is English, can speak English very well.

In these sentences the relative pronoun CAN NEVER BE OMITTED.

For grammar rules and examples on relative pronouns see *English Plus* on page 94 or

*Inside Grammar* on pages 291- 293- 295.