

Relative Clauses

LEVEL 2

DEFINING VERSUS NON-DEFINING

Defining Relative Clause



The girl who is wearing a dress is my cousin.



This is necessary to identify the girl.

Non-Defining Relative Clause



Valerie, who is wearing a dress in that picture, is my cousin.



This is additional information about Valerie.
We already know who she is.

Non-Defining Relative Clause



Valerie, who is wearing a dress in that picture, is my cousin.

Valerie is my cousin.



In other words, if I remove the relative clause it is still clear who the subject is.

Read the example of a non-defining relative clause

Rules

Mary Shelley, **who** he recommended to read, was the author of Frankenstein.



1. We **need commas** to separate it from the main sentence.
2. We always use a relative pronoun to start a non-defining relative clause: **who, which, whose, when or where** (but not that).
3. We can't take out the relative pronoun (even if it is a direct object).
4. If the clause is at the end, there is only one comma:
 - William the Conqueror established the Tower of London, where many important people were imprisoned.

Defining or Non-defining?

We usually use relative non-defining clauses when the subject of the main clause is one of the following:

A proper noun:

- Prague, which is the capital of the Czech Republic, is home to an extensive historic centre.

When we use possessive adjectives or demonstrative pronouns that identify the subject:

- Her school, which is bilingual, is at the top of the hill.
- These kids, whose parents are in the meeting, can stay in the playground.

Exercise Time

Join the sentences by using a non-defining relative clause.

1. King Henry VIII was married six times. He had two of his wives executed.
2. Catherine of Aragon was Henry VIII's first wife. She was older than him.
3. Anne Boleyn was Queen of England from 1533 to 1536. She was King Henry VIII's second wife.
4. Elisabeth I became queen in 1558. She was Anne Boleyn's daughter.

And finally

To talk about **places** and **times** we can use **where** and **when** or **which + a preposition**.

*The Natural History Museum, **where** we used to go on Sundays, is too far now.*

*The Natural History Museum, **which** we used to go **to** on Sundays, is too far now.*

However, if there is no preposition only which is possible.

*The Natural History Museum, **which** is in Cromwell Road, is too far now.*