

Relative pronouns used to introduce adjective clauses

We have already learned that an adjective clause is a group of words that works like an adjective. Adjectives are used to modify nouns. In the same way, adjective clauses are also used to modify nouns.

In this lesson we will take a look at the five relative pronouns used to introduce adjective clauses. Note that adjective clauses are also called relative clauses.

The most common adjective clauses begin with the relative pronouns *who*, *which* and *that*. Note that *who* is only used to refer to people and *which* is only used to refer to things. *That* can be used to refer to both people and things.

The other two relative pronouns used to introduce adjective clauses are *whose* and *whom*. *Whose* is the possessive form of *who*. *Whom* is the object form of *who*.

The girl, *whose* brother we met in the morning, is my sister's classmate.
Here the relative pronoun *whose* shows the relationship between the girl and her brother.

Whom can replace object pronouns (*him*, *her*, *them* etc.) *Who* and *whom* are often confused. Although it is possible to use *whom* instead of *who* in a less formal style, you have to keep the distinction between these forms in academic writing.

Note that when *whom* is used in a sentence, it will be immediately followed by another noun / pronoun and verb. *Who*, on the other hand, acts as the subject of the relative clause and hence it is not immediately followed by another noun.

She married a rich guy *whom* I have known for quite some time. (Note that *whom* is immediately followed by another pronoun.)

She married an engineer *who* was my senior at university. (NOT She married an engineer *whom* was my ...)