

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 ...)