

*Sentence Development Tutorial:*

**Tutorial 19:**  
**Adjective Clauses**

**Writing Center**  
**English 800 Center**

**All notes and exercises should be done on separate sheets of paper, which you will bring to your conference with an instructor in the center.**

**As you work through the tutorial, make sure to see an instructional aide at the front desk in the Writing Center or English 800 Center if you have any questions or difficulties.**

## Adjective Clauses

Consider the following sentences:

- A. I cannot find the man from the repair shop. He helped me fix my car yesterday.
- B. I cannot find the man from the repair shop that helped me fix my car yesterday.

In your own words, explain which writing is better, A or B, and why.

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As you may have noticed, the sentences in A are short, choppy, and disconnected. On the other hand, the sentence in B, connects the ideas in those two sentences smoothly. Instead of using two sentences to convey the information about the man from the repair shop, the writer has combined the sentences using an **adjective clause**: **that helped me fix my car yesterday**.

An adjective clause describes a noun in the same sentence. In this case, the adjective clause “**that helped me fix my car yesterday**” describes the man from the repair shop with extra, descriptive information without the writer having to create a new sentence.

Understanding how an adjective clause works is easiest if you recognize the sentence that contains the adjective clause as a transformed combination of two separate sentences. In both A and B, a pronoun represents the noun, **man**. In A, the pronoun, **he**, is the man from the repair shop. In sentence, B, the pronoun, **that**, is also the man from the repair shop. The pronoun **that** allows the writer to combine the first two sentences into one. Pronouns that begin adjectives clauses are called **relative pronouns**.

Consider the next two sentences.

- A. The photographer asked Alejandro and Jaime to the party. She works for *Time*.
- B. The photographer **who works for *Time*** asked Alejandro and Jaime to the party.

In A, the pronoun, **she**, is the photographer. In the combined sentence, B, the relative pronoun, **who**, is also the photographer. The relative pronoun, **who**, begins the adjective clause, **who works for *Time***, and allows the writer to combine the two sentences into one.

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| <p><b>Principle I:</b> To combine two separate sentences into a single sentence with an adjective clause, you must change the pronoun into a <b>relative pronoun</b> like <i>that</i>, <i>who</i>, or <i>which</i>.</p> |
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## Creating Adjective Clauses

This is a list of the relative pronouns that begin adjective clauses, the kinds of nouns that each relative pronoun can refer to, and the pronoun that each relative pronoun can replace in a combined sentence.

| RELATIVE PRONOUN           | REFERS TO         | REPLACES                          | USAGE   | EXAMPLE  |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Who</b>                 | people or animals | she, he, they                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subject of clause</li> </ul>   | <p>Fido, <u>who</u> loves to run fast, is a very large black dog.</p> <p>Fido is a very large black dog. <u>He</u> loves to run fast. (subject)</p>  |
| <b>Whom</b>                | people or animals | her, him, them                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Object of verb or preposition within clause</li> <li>Remember the <b>M</b> &gt; <b>Whom</b> = <b>him</b>.</li> </ul> | <p>Fido, <u>whom</u> I personally trained, works as a guide dog.</p> <p>Fido works as a guide dog. I personally trained <u>him</u>. (object)</p>   |
| <b>Which</b>               | things            | it, they, them                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be subject or object</li> </ul>  | <p>George bought a used car <u>which/that</u> gave him endless problems.</p> <p>George bought a used car. <u>It</u> gave him endless problems. (Subject)</p> <p>George bought a car <u>which/that</u> he thought he would like.</p> <p>George bought a car. He thought he would like <u>it</u>. (object)</p> |
| <b>That</b>                | people or things  | she, he, they, it; her, him, them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be subject or object</li> </ul>  | <p>He has found a mechanic <u>that/who</u> does excellent work.</p> <p>He has found a mechanic. <u>He</u> does excellent work.</p>   |
| <b>Whose</b>               | people or things  | her, his, their; its              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Possessive</li> </ul>  | <p>The mechanic works in a garage <u>whose</u> sign is broken.</p> <p>The mechanic works in a garage. <u>Its</u> sign is broken.</p>   |
| <b>Where</b>               | place             | there here                        |   | <p>The mechanic works at the garage <u>where</u> all the locals hang out.</p> <p>The mechanic works at the garage. All the locals hang out <u>there</u>.</p>   |
| <b>Preposition + Whom</b>  | person            | her, him, them                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be careful not to repeat the preposition.</li> </ul>   | <p>The salesperson <u>from whom</u> George bought his car was a jerk.</p> <p>The salesperson was a jerk. George bought his car from <u>him</u>.</p>  |
| <b>Preposition + Which</b> | thing             | it, they, them                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be careful not to repeat the preposition.</li> </ul>   | <p>The credit card <u>which</u> he paid <u>with</u> was declined.</p> <p>The credit card was declined. He paid <u>with it</u>.</p>   |

## Exercise 1

**Instructions:** The noun and its pronoun in each group of sentences are in boldface. Using Principle I and the chart “Creating Adjective Clauses,” combine the sentences with an adjective clause, by replacing the pronoun with the correct relative pronoun—*who*, *that*, or *which*. The first one has been done for you.

1. Lydia bought **a used car**. **It** gave her endless problems.

Lydia bought **a used car** that (or which) gave her endless problems.

2. Lydia took her car to **a mechanic**. **He** told her it would cost \$560 to fix it.

Lydia took her car to **a mechanic** \_\_\_\_\_ told her it would cost \$560 to fix it.

3. Lydia bought **a new car**. **It** runs like a dream.

Lydia bought **a new car** \_\_\_\_\_ runs like a dream.

## Placement of Adjective Clauses and Relative Pronouns

Adjective clauses must be placed *right after* the nouns they modify. For example, to make the second sentence below into an adjective clause, we have to ask the question: what does **it** refer to—the chair or the TV?

The chair is next to the TV. **It** is older than my little sister.

If **it** refers to the chair, then put the adjective clause *right after* the word **chair**:

The **chair, which is older than my little sister**, is next to the TV.

If **it** refers to the TV, then put the adjective clause *right after* the word TV:

The chair is next to the **TV, which is older than my sister**.

Another point to remember about adjective clauses is that sometimes the pronoun you are replacing may not come at the beginning of the sentence.

For example:

Laura bought some **tomato paste**. She planned to use **it** to make spaghetti sauce.

Laura bought a can of **tomato paste, which** she planned to use to make spaghetti sauce.

Here, the pronoun being replaced, **it**, is in the middle of the sentence. It is important to place the adjective clause that begins with the relative pronoun *right after* the noun that it modifies, in this case, **which**.

You would not simply want to replace **it** with **which**. For example, consider this incorrect sentence:

Laura bought a can of **tomato paste** she planned to use **which** to make spaghetti sauce.

**Principle II:** It is important to place the adjective clause *right after* the noun that it modifies. Always put the relative pronoun that replaces the pronoun at the *beginning of the adjective clause*.

## Exercise 2

**Instructions:** Using Principles I and II and the chart “Creating Adjective Clauses,” combine the sentences with an adjective clause, by replacing the pronoun with the correct relative pronoun. The first one has been done for you.

1. Mickey bought a **stereo**. He believed **it** was well made.  
*Mickey bought a stereo that he believed was well made.*
2. The **boy** wears a ring in his nose. **He** is our number one suspect.
3. The **girl** did well on her last English paper. Tom knows **her** from high school.
4. The **fan** broke a week after the warranty expired. I bought **it** at Target.

### Exercise 3

**Instructions:** It is important to remember that **who**, **which**, and **that**, are not the only relative pronouns. Using the chart “Creating Adjective Clauses,” combine the sentences by using the correct relative pronoun. The first one has been done for you.

1. He went to the store where he met his wife.
2. The Ancient Greeks had special theaters \_\_\_\_\_ they would go to see tragedies performed.
3. My dog Wordy, \_\_\_\_\_ I personally trained, comes to work with me.
4. Vinh has a friend \_\_\_\_\_ family owns a restaurant.
5. My mother’s friend, \_\_\_\_\_ name means “flower” in Spanish, is coming from Guadalajara for a visit.

### Punctuating Adjective Clauses

Consider the following sentences.

The man **who wears the brown beret** owns six cats.

This man lives in the house **where my best friend used to live**.

In the first sentence, as well as describing the man, the adjective clause **who wears the brown beret** helps the reader **identify** exactly which man the writer is talking about. Similarly, in the second sentence, the clause **where my best friend used to live** helps to **identify** in which house the man lives.

On the other hand, consider these sentences.

Maria Torres, **who works at IBM**, was recently promoted.

Golden Gate Park, **which borders Ocean Beach**, has a museum, a tea garden, and an arboretum.

In these examples, **Maria Torres** and **Golden Gate Park** are very specific nouns, and the adjective clauses aren’t required to identify them. These adjective clauses merely provide additional descriptive information.

**Principle III:** Generally, if the adjective clause is helping to identify the noun it describes, do *not* use commas to set it off. However, if the adjective clause is only helping to describe the noun but is not identifying it, use commas to set off the adjective clause.

### Exercise 4

**Instructions:** Using Principles I, II, and III, combine the sentences with an adjective clause, by replacing the pronoun with the correct relative pronoun. Remember to punctuate each adjective clause correctly. The first one has been done for you.

1. We have added a couple of plants in our backyard.  
They will cover most of the area in front of the tree.

*We have added a couple of plants that will cover most of the area in front of the tree in our backyard.*

2. The referee blew his whistle and then shouted at the offending player.  
He was obviously upset about his lack of authority.
3. Since 1984, the fashion industry has grown tremendously.  
It is now heavily influenced by trends from Paris and Milan.
4. Muriel Keller knows how expensive it can be to stay in style.  
She buys clothes, shoes and accessories.
5. One of the most relaxing activities that I can think of is camping in Sequoia National Park.  
There are lots of trees, meadows, and streams there.

### Some Rules for Using Adjective Clauses

- Use **who** only for **people** or **animals** (to replace **he, she, or they**).
- Use **whom** only for **people** or **animals** (to replace **him, her, or them**).
- Use **which** only for **things** (to replace **it, they, or them**), whether those things are the subject or the object of the sentence.
- Use **that** for **people** or **things** (to replace **he, she, it, they; him, her, them**), whether those people or things are the subject or the object of the sentence; however, do not use **that** after a preposition.
- Use **whose** for **people** or **things** (to replace **his, her, their; its**)
- **Where** refers to **place** (to replace **there** and **here**).

### Exercise 5

**Instructions:** Using Principles I, II, and III, rewrite the following paragraph by combining as many of the sentences as possible with adjective clauses. Feel free to change the wording and order of the sentences. Remember to punctuate each adjective clause correctly.

My mom and dad opened a restaurant when they retired. They live in Las Vegas. People have lots of money there. After a year, their business was booming. The gamblers would buy bottles of champagne. Champagne made them feel like they were celebrating. They were happy about winning so much money. Couples frequented the restaurant. They were out for a romantic evening or celebrating their recent marriages. Mom and Dad are smart businesspeople. They were always looking for new ways to bring in the customers. They served Italian food and baked their own bread. Their business was built on the motto “just like mom used to make.” They sold pasta sauces in bottles. The pasta sauces were homemade. They sold the business. It had made them a million dollars.

## Exercise 6

### Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay that you are working on and try to incorporate adjective clauses into your own writing.
2. Look back at the principles and exercises in this tutorial and make notes on a separate sheet of paper. You will bring these notes and the essay to your conference.
3. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor in the Writing Center (18-104) or English 800 Center (18-102). To make this appointment, stop by the Centers or call (650) 574-6436. During this appointment, the professor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to these exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.

### Reminder:

For this appointment, bring

- any notes about the tutorial that you have taken
- your completed tutorial exercises
- and the essay