

Willingness and refusal

- 1 *Will* expresses willingness. *Won't* expresses a refusal by either people or things. *Shall* is used in questions.

I'll help you.
*She says she **won't** get up until she's had breakfast in bed.*
*The car **won't** start.*
Shall I give you a hand?

- 2 The past is expressed by *wouldn't*.

*My boss said she **wouldn't** give me a promotion. I'm going to look for another job.*

Requests

Several modal verbs express a request.

Can/Could/Will/Would you do me a favour?
Can/Could I open the window?

Modal verbs are also dealt with in Units 9, 10, and 11.

Unit 8

8.1 Introduction to relative clauses

It is important to understand the difference between two kinds of relative clauses.

- 1 Defining relative (DR) clauses qualify a noun, and tell us exactly which person or thing is being referred to.

*She likes people **who are good fun to be with**.*
*Politicians **who tell lies** are odious.*
*A corkscrew is a thing **you use to open a bottle of wine**.*

She likes people on its own doesn't mean very much; we need to know which people she likes.

who tell lies tells us exactly which politicians are odious. Without it, the speaker is saying that all politicians are odious.

A corkscrew is a thing doesn't make sense on its own.

- 2 Non-defining relative (NDR) clauses add secondary information to a sentence, almost as an afterthought.

*My friend Andrew, **who is Scottish**, plays the bagpipes.*
*Politicians, **who tell lies**, are odious.*
*My favourite building is Durham Cathedral, **which took over 200 years to build**.*

My friend Andrew is clearly defined. We don't need to know which Andrew is being discussed. The clause *who is Scottish* gives us extra information about him.

The clause *who tell lies* suggests that all politicians tell lies. It isn't necessary to identify only those that deceive – they all do!

My favourite building is clearly defined. The following clause simply tells us something extra.

- 3 DR clauses are much more common in spoken language, and NDR clauses are more common in written language. In spoken language, we tend to avoid NDR clauses.

My friend Andrew plays the bagpipes. He's Scottish.

- 4 When we speak, there is no pause before or after a DR clause, and no commas when we write. With NDR clauses, there are commas before and after, and pauses when we speak.

I like the things you say to me. (No commas, no pauses)
My aunt (pause), who has been a widow for 20 years (pause), loves travelling.

Defining relative clauses

- 1 Notice how we can leave out the relative pronoun if it is the object of the relative clause. This is very common.

Relative pronoun left out

Did you like the present () I gave you?
Who was that man () you were talking to?
The thing () I like about Dave is his sense of humour.

- 2 We cannot leave out the pronoun if it is the subject of the clause.

Relative pronoun not left out

*I met a man **who** works in advertising.*
*I'll lend you a book **that** changed my life.*

- 3 Here are the possible pronouns for people and things. The words in brackets are possible, but not as common. () means 'nothing'.

	Person	Thing
Subject	who (that)	that (which)
Object	() (that)	() (that)

Notes

- That* is preferred to *which* after superlatives, and words such as *all*, *every(thing)*, *some(thing)*, *any(thing)*, and *only*.

*That's the **funniest** film **that** was ever made.*
***All that's** left is a few slices of ham.*
*He's good at **any** sport **that** is played with a ball.*
*The **only** thing **that'll** help you is rest.*

- Prepositions usually come at the end of the relative clause.

*Come and meet the people I work **with**.*
*This is the book I was telling you **about**.*
*She's a friend I can always rely **on**.*

Non-defining relative clauses

- 1 Relative pronouns cannot be left out of NDR clauses.

Relative pronoun as subject

*Rob Jennings, **who** has written several books, is a music expert.*
*His last book, **which** was on Mozart, was a great success.*

Relative pronoun as object

*Rob Jennings, **who** I knew at university, is a music expert.*
*His last book, **which** I loved, was on Mozart.*

- 2 Look at the possible pronouns for people and things. *Whom* is possible, but not as common as it is very formal.

	Person	Thing
Subject	..., who ... ,	..., which ... ,
Object	..., who (whom) ... ,	..., which ... ,

Note

Prepositions can come at the end of the clause.

*The talk was on fractals, which I'd never heard **of**.*

In a more formal written style, prepositions come before the pronoun.

*The privatization of railways, **to which** the present government is committed, is not universally popular.*