

We can also use non-defining relative clauses to show consecutive actions:

*Heskey passed the ball to Owen, **who scored a magnificent goal.***

We always use a relative pronoun, e.g. *which*, *who*, to introduce non-defining relative clauses:

✗ *Last year's winner presented the cup, each holder keeps for the year.*

✓ *Last year's winner presented the cup, **which** each holder keeps for the year.*

However, we don't use *that* in the same way:

✗ *This offer, that will not be repeated, must end next week.*

4 Defining or non-defining relative clause?

Compare:

DEFINING *The natives who traded with the settlers retained their land.*

This answers the question 'Which natives retained their land?' The answer is 'the ones who traded with the settlers'. It identifies or defines particular natives and this means that some of the natives probably didn't trade with the settlers and therefore lost their land.

NON-DEFINING *The natives, who traded with the settlers, retained their land.*

This sentence means 'The natives retained their land.' It doesn't identify particular natives, so it means that all the natives retained their land.

In written English the use of commas shows these differences.

- In non-defining clauses we use a comma to separate the relative clause from the rest of the sentence.
- In defining relative clauses we don't use commas at all.



Pronunciation ► 1.16

The use of commas also reflects the way we say the two types of relative clause. In defining relative clauses, there is no pause between the main clause and the relative clause:

We asked for the lovely double room which had a sea view.

Although we don't often use non-defining relative clauses in speech, when we do there is usually a falling intonation at the end of the main clause:

We asked for the lovely double room (↘), which had a sea view.

5 Comment clauses

We can add a non-defining relative clause to the end of a sentence to make a comment about the information (not the noun) in the main clause. Unlike most non-defining relative clauses, comment clauses are common in spoken English.

FACT *Winston Churchill lost the 1945 election.*

COMMENT *People didn't expect this.*

→ *Winston Churchill lost the 1945 election, **which was rather unexpected.***

In conversation, we can use a comment clause to add our opinion:

A *We had to wait for over an hour to see the doctor.*

B ***Which is outrageous!***



We use *which*, NOT *who*, *whose*, *that* or *it* to introduce a comment clause within a sentence:

✗ *Harold never phones before visiting, that is annoying.*

✓ *Harold never phones before visiting, **which is annoying.***

In writing we always put a comma before *which*, and in speech there is usually a falling intonation at the end of the main clause.