

54 Pronouns, adverbs and prepositions in relative clauses

Although gangster Al Capone was responsible for a number of murders and extortion rackets in 1930s Chicago, the crime for which he was eventually tried and imprisoned was tax evasion.



1 Relative pronouns

This chart lists relative pronouns and how they can be used:

PRONOUNS	USED FOR	SUBJECT	OBJECT	DEFINING	NON-DEFINING
<i>who</i> ¹	people, animals	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>whom</i> ²	people	✗	✓	✓	✓
<i>which</i> ³	objects, animals	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>that</i> ⁴	people, objects, animals	✓	✓	✓	✗
<i>whose</i>	relationships, possessions	✓	✓	✓	✓
no pronoun ⁵	people, things, animals	✗	✓	✓	✗

¹ We can use *who* to refer to animals when they are known individuals, e.g. domestic pets:

*Is Sheba the cat **who** was run over and nearly killed last year?*

² *Whom* is formal and we rarely use it in speech. We now mainly use *whom* after prepositions (see 54.2).

³ We always use *which* (not *who*) to refer to inanimate objects. (For *which* to introduce a comment clause ► Unit 53.5).

⁴ In spoken English we can use *that* or *who* to refer to people.

⁵ (For information on omitting pronouns in object defining relative clauses ► Unit 53.2).

ACADEMIC ENGLISH In formal and academic English we use *which* rather than *that* in defining relative clauses:

*This report is based on the survey **which** was conducted by Shering and Beecham.*

We can also use *whose* to refer to inanimate objects:

*It would only be possible to colonise planets **whose atmosphere** contained enough oxygen to sustain human life. (= the atmosphere of which)*

2 Relative clauses with prepositions

We can use prepositions with relative pronouns. Their position depends on formality:

	INFORMAL / NEUTRAL	FORMAL
<i>My grandparents lived in the house but they didn't own it.</i>	<i>My grandparents didn't own the house (which/that) they lived in.</i>	<i>Our clients, Mr and Mrs Thompson, did not own the house in which they lived.</i>
<i>I'd like some information about an insurance claim. I referred to it in an email.</i>	<i>Do you have any information about the insurance claim (that/which) I referred to in my email?</i>	<i>The insurance claim to which you referred does not appear to be in our records.</i>

! We do not put a preposition before the relative pronoun *that*:

✗ *They didn't own the house **in that** they lived.*

If we put a preposition before *who*, the pronoun always becomes *whom*:

*The patients, **among whom** there were several immigrants, had to undergo a series of tests.*

Compare:

*The people **who this report is addressed to** will have to consider its proposals carefully.*

*The people **to whom this report is addressed** will have to consider its proposals carefully.*