

Relative clauses 1: clauses with **who/that/which**

**A** Study this example situation:

Last week we had a party and a lot of people came. Everybody enjoyed it.

Everybody **who came to the party** enjoyed it.

relative clause

A *clause* is a part of a sentence. A *relative clause* tells us which person or thing (or what kind of person or thing) the speaker means:

the woman **who lives next door to me**

(‘who lives next door to me’ tells us which woman)

people **who complain all the time**

(‘who complain all the time’ tells us what kind of people)

We use **who** in a relative clause for people (not things):

- ☐ The woman **who** lives next door to me is a doctor.
- ☐ I don't like **people who** complain all the time.
- ☐ An architect is **someone who** designs buildings.
- ☐ What was the name of **the person who** called?
- ☐ Do you know **anyone who** wants to buy a car?

We also use **that** for people, but not **which**:

- ☐ The woman **that lives next door to me** is a doctor. (*not* the woman which)

Sometimes you must use **who** (*not* that) for people – see Unit 95.

**B** When we are talking about things, we use **that** or **which** (*not* who) in a relative clause:

- ☐ I don't like **stories that** have unhappy endings.  
or ... **stories which** have unhappy endings.
- ☐ Grace works for **a company that** makes furniture.  
or ... **a company which** makes furniture.
- ☐ **The machine that** broke down is working again now.  
or **The machine which** broke down ...

In these examples **that** is more usual than **which**, but sometimes you must use **which**. See Unit 95.

**C** In relative clauses we use **who/that/which**, not **he/she/they/it**.

Compare:

- ☐ I met a Canadian woman at the party. **She** is an English teacher. (*2 sentences*)
- ☐ I met **a Canadian woman who** is an English teacher. (*1 sentence*)
- ☐ I can't find the keys. **They** were on the table.  
Where are **the keys that** were on the table? (*not* the keys they were)

**D** **What** = the thing(s) that

Compare **what** and **that**:

- ☐ **What happened** was my fault. (= the thing that happened)
- but
- ☐ Everything **that happened** was my fault.  
(*not* Everything what happened)
  - ☐ The machine **that broke down** is now working again.  
(*not* The machine what broke down)

## Exercises

**92.1** What do these words mean? Choose from the box and write sentences with **who**.

steals from a shop	buys something from a shop
<del>designs buildings</del>	pays rent to live somewhere
doesn't tell the truth	breaks into a house to steal things
is not brave	expects the worst to happen

- (an architect) *An architect is someone who designs buildings.*
- (a customer) .....
- (a burglar) .....
- (a coward) .....
- (a tenant) .....
- (a shoplifter) .....
- (a liar) .....
- (a pessimist) .....

**92.2** Make one sentence from two. Use **who/that/which**.

- A girl was injured in the accident. She is now in hospital.  
*The girl who was injured in the accident is now in hospital.*
- A waiter served us. He was impolite and impatient.  
The .....
- A building was destroyed in the fire. It has now been rebuilt.  
The .....
- Some people were arrested. They have now been released.  
The .....
- A bus goes to the airport. It runs every half hour.  
The .....

**92.3** Complete the sentences. Choose from the box and use **who/that/which**.

happened in the past	<del>makes furniture</del>
runs away from home	can support life
cannot be explained	has stayed there
developed the theory of relativity	were hanging on the wall

- Helen works for a company *that makes furniture*
- The movie is about a girl .....
- What happened to the pictures .....?
- A mystery is something .....
- I've heard it's a good hotel, but I don't know anyone .....
- History is the study of things .....
- Albert Einstein was the scientist .....
- It seems that Earth is the only planet .....

**92.4** Are these sentences right or wrong? Correct them where necessary.

- I don't like stories who have unhappy endings. *stories that have*
- What was the name of the person who phoned? *OK*
- Where's the nearest shop who sells bread? .....
- Dan said some things about me they were not true. ....
- The driver which caused the accident was fined £500. ....
- Do you know the person that took these pictures? .....
- We live in a world what is changing all the time. ....
- Gary apologised for what he said. ....
- What was the name of the horse what won the race? .....