

## Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns fall into two categories: *definite* relative pronouns (which build adjectival clauses) and *indefinite* relative pronouns (whose clauses act like nouns).

Put another way, relative pronouns help form *relative clauses* that function either as adjectives or nouns.

Relative pronouns are *who* (*whom*, *whose*), *which*, *that*, *whoever* (*whomever*, *whosever*), *what*, *whatever*.

The man *who stole the car* has been caught.

*The man has been caught* is the main clause. The relative clause is used as an adjective to modify the noun *man*.

The choice of *who* or *whom* depends on its construction **within** the relative clause.

The man *whom you accused* is not guilty.

The grammarian *to whom I spoke* was very helpful.

Here the relative pronouns serve as objects, of the verb *accused* and of the preposition *to*; therefore the objective form is used.

Compare:

whom you accused

who accused you

*Whose*, the possessive form of *who*, is commonly used as an adjective.

The woman *whose house I rented* is my cousin. (*whose* mod. house)

The relative pronouns *which* and *that* do not have case changes.

The wind [*that* comes in spring] . . . (subject)

The house [*that* Tom built] . . . (direct object)

The book [to *which* he referred] . . . (obj. of prep)

Definite relative pronouns have antecedents in the main clause and are adjectival. When used without antecedents, relative pronouns are called *indefinite*.

I can guess [*whom* you're referring to.]

I know [*whose* it was]

[*What* I think] doesn't seem to matter.

[*Whoever* comes] will be welcome

He does [*whatever* he likes.]

*Notice that the relative clauses in the sentences above are not used as adjectives but as nouns. How about in the sentences below?*

Whoever you sat by surely enjoyed the game.

The weathervane that had survived so much weather finally broke and tumbled to the ground in a way that was very mournful.

The coffee which she brewed looked like syrupy gas-like oily soup.