141 The use of relative clauses

1 Introduction

There are two kinds of relative clause. Compare this conversation and newspaper report.

Laura: *Art Golding has died.*
Trevor: *Who?*
Laura: *You know. The film star **who played the ship's captain in 'Iceberg'**.*
Trevor: *I don't think I've seen that.*
Laura: *Yes, you have. It's the film **we saw on TV the other night**.*

ART GOLDING DIES

The actor Art Golding, <u>who starred in films such as 'Tornado' and 'Iceberg'</u>, has died after a long illness. He was seventy-eight. Art Golding's most famous role was as the scientist in the film 'Supernova', <u>which broke all box-office records</u>.

The clauses in this conversation identify which film star and which film Laura means. They are called identifying clauses.

The clauses in this report add information about Art Golding and about 'Supernova'. They are called adding clauses, or sometimes non-identifying clauses.

2 Identifying clauses and adding clauses

IDENTIFYING

The man **who lives next door to Melanie** is rather strange.
The river **which flows through Hereford** is the Wye.
The picture **which was damaged** is worth thousands of pounds.

These clauses identify which thing the speaker is talking about. The clause **who lives next door to Melanie** tells us which man. The clause **which flows through Hereford** tells us which river. Without the relative clause the sentence would be incomplete. **The man is rather strange** makes sense only if we know which man.

An identifying clause does <u>not have commas</u> around it.

Most relative clauses are identifying. We use them both in speech and in writing.

ADDING

Jake, **who lives next door to Melanie**, is rather strange.
The Wye (**which flows through Hereford**) is a beautiful river.
This famous picture – **which was damaged during the war** – is worth thousands of pounds.

These clauses add extra information about something which is already identified. The clause **who lives next door to Melanie** adds information about Jake. But we can say the sentence on its own without the relative clause. **Jake is rather strange** makes sense because the name **Jake** identifies who we are talking about.

An adding clause <u>has commas around it</u>. Instead of commas, we can use brackets ( ) or dashes – –. If the adding clause is at the end of the sentence, we need only one comma or dash.
That's Jake, who lives next door.

Adding clauses can be rather formal. We use them mainly in writing. They are common in news reports. In speech we often use two short sentences. *Jake lives next door to Melanie. He's rather strange.*

no that

Practice

A Adding clauses (1)

no that

Match the parts and write sentences with an adding clause. Use *who* or *which*.

▶	The Grand Canyon	He was in prison for 27 years.	He was one of the Beatles.
1	Nelson Mandela	He was killed in 1980.	He became President of South Africa.
2	John Lennon	It is 140 million miles away.	<u>It is one of the wonders of the world.</u>
3	The Titanic	<u>It is over 200 miles long.</u>	It is known as the red planet.
4	Queen Victoria	It sank in 1912.	It stood for 28 years.
5	Mars	It was built in 1961.	It was supposed to be unsinkable.
6	The Berlin Wall	She came to the throne in 1837.	She ruled over the British Empire.

▶ *The Grand Canyon, which is over 200 miles long, is one of the wonders of the world.*
1 ....
2 ....
3 ....
4 ....
5 ....
6 ....

B Identifying or adding? (2)

Read the news article and then say what each relative clause does. Does it tell us which one, or does it add information?

The play (▶) <u>that the students put on last week</u> was Oscar Wilde's 'The Importance of Being Earnest', (▶) <u>which was written in 1895</u>. The college theatre, (1) <u>which holds over 400 people</u>, was unfortunately only half full for the Friday evening performance. However, the people (2) <u>who bothered to attend</u> must have been glad they did. Lucy Kellett, (3) <u>who played Lady Bracknell</u>, was magnificent. Unfortunately the young man (4) <u>who played John Worthing</u> forgot his lines twice, but that did not spoil the evening, (5) <u>which was a great success</u>.

▶ *It tells us which play.*
▶ *It adds information about 'The Importance of Being Earnest'.*
1 ....
2 ....
3 ....
4 ....
5 ....

C Commas in relative clauses (2)

Put in the relative clauses. You may also need to put in one or two commas.
▶ (that Claire drives) This car is a lot cheaper than the one *that Claire drives* .
▶ (who has twins) Olivia, *who has twins* , often needs a babysitter.
1 (who took Rita to the party) The person .... was Tom.
2 (who has a bad temper) Henry .... shouted at the waiter.
3 (which Tom supports) The team .... is United.
4 (who is afraid of heights) We all climbed up except Vicky ....
5 (which is on the tenth floor) My new flat .... has a terrific view.
6 (she bought the sofa from) Sarah can't remember the name of the shop ....