

A2 · TEENS · LESSON 16 · RELATIVE CLAUSES

The girl who lives here.

One tiny word — *who, which, that, where, whose* — and suddenly two short sentences become one smooth one. Relative clauses are how English stitches extra detail onto a noun without starting over. Master them and your writing sounds twice as natural.

who · which · that

The three basics

where · whose

Two more

one sentence → richer

Why we use them

I

Warm-Up

Connect · combine · describe

Two sentences, or one?

In English, we hate repeating the same noun. When we want to add **extra info about a person, thing, or place**, we use a little joining word. Look at each pair — can you combine them into *one* smooth sentence?

1. "I have a friend. **She** speaks four languages." (*Which word replaces "she"?*)
2. "That's the café. **It** makes the best baklava." (*Which word replaces "it"?*)
3. "This is the village. I grew up **there**." (*Which word replaces "there"?*)
4. "Zeynep is the girl. **Her** brother plays for the school team." (*Which word replaces "her"?*)

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Grammar Focus

Relative Clauses: *who, which, that, where, whose*

A *relative clause* is a group of words that gives **extra information about a noun**. It starts with a special "joining word" — called a **relative pronoun** — and fits neatly inside a bigger sentence.

Instead of saying two short choppy sentences like "*I know a boy. He lives in Tokyo.*", we use **who** to join them: "*I know a boy **who** lives in Tokyo.*" The relative pronoun replaces the repeated noun and pulls the two ideas together into one smooth sentence.

THE PATTERN

Noun + **who / which / that / where / whose** + extra info.

"I have a friend **who** speaks four languages." · "That's the café **which** makes the best baklava."

THE FIVE JOINING WORDS — A QUICK MAP

Which word for which noun?

Each relative pronoun has a clear job. Pick the right one by asking: **am I describing a person, a thing, a place, or something someone owns?** Learn these five and you can describe almost anything.

WHO · PEOPLE

"The teacher **who** sings in class."

Use for **people**. Replaces he / she / they.

WHICH · THINGS / ANIMALS

"The app **which** teaches languages."

Use for **things, animals, ideas**. Replaces it / they.

THAT · BOTH (INFORMAL)

"The book **that** I bought."

Works for **both** people and things in casual English.

WHERE · PLACES

"The café **where** we met."

Use for **places**. Replaces there / in that place.

Plus one more: *whose* — for possession (belonging). "The girl **whose** brother plays football." It means "her brother plays football."

USE 1 · DESCRIBING PEOPLE**who · that**

When you want to give extra information about a person, use **who** (or *that* in casual speech). It answers the question: "Which person?" or "What kind of person?"

*"She's the girl **who** won the competition."*

*"I met a photographer **who** works for National Geographic."*

*"He's the cousin **that** I told you about."*

USE 2 · DESCRIBING THINGS**which · that**

For things, animals, or ideas, use **which** (more formal) or **that** (very common in speaking and informal writing). Both work — English loves the flexibility.

*"This is the book **which** changed my life."*

*"The app **that** you recommended is amazing."*

*"I lost the keys **which** my dad gave me."*

USE 3 · PLACES & POSSESSION

where · whose

Use **where** for places ("the shop *where* I buy bread"). Use **whose** to show belonging — it replaces *his, her, their, its*. Less common, but very useful.

"That's the park **where** we first met."

"She's the friend **whose** dog just had puppies."

"I miss the village **where** my grandparents live."

△ THE CLASSIC A2 TRAP

Don't repeat the subject — the relative pronoun *is* the subject

The most common A2 mistake: learners translate word-for-word and accidentally use **two subjects**. In English, the relative pronoun (*who, which, that*) **already replaces** the noun — so don't add *he, she, it, they* again.

X WRONG

"The boy **who he** lives next door..."
(two subjects: *who + he*)

✓ RIGHT

"The boy **who** lives next door..." (just *who*)

X WRONG

"The film **which it** won an Oscar..."
(two subjects)

✓ RIGHT

"The film **which** won an Oscar..."
(clean and correct)

**Key Vocabulary**

10 words to describe people, things & places

WORD	POS	MEANING	EXAMPLE
neighbour	(n)	someone who lives near you	<i>The neighbour who lives upstairs plays music.</i>
stranger	(n)	person you don't know	<i>A stranger who was walking by helped me.</i>
recommend	(v)	suggest / say something is good	<i>This is the café that my sister recommended.</i>
remind (of)	(v)	make you think of something	<i>She's the girl who reminds me of my cousin.</i>
belong (to)	(v)	be owned by	<i>That's the dog whose collar belongs to my neighbour.</i>
memory	(n)	something you remember	<i>The park where we played has my memories.</i>
amazing	(adj)	wonderful, very impressive	<i>Zeynep is the girl who won the amazing prize.</i>
annoying	(adj)	irritating, bothersome	<i>He's the friend whose jokes are annoying.</i>
favourite	(adj)	liked most	<i>That's the bookshop where I buy favourite novels.</i>
exactly	(adv)	precisely, without doubt	<i>She's exactly the person that we need.</i>

IV Reading

Four stories, four joining words

THE JOINING WORDS ISSUE · VOLUME 16

People, places & the words that connect them

A new friend in Auckland, a market in Lagos, streets of memory in Istanbul, and a family secret in Belgrade. Four teenagers, five tiny words, one big grammar point.

STORY ONE · NEW SCHOOL, NEW FACES

Tevita, 14 · Auckland

Tevita moved schools in February, right in the middle of the year. On his first day, he sat alone at lunch and tried to read the same menu three times. Then a girl with curly hair sat down across from him. "I'm Mia," she said. "You're new. Don't sit alone, it's weird."

Three weeks later, Tevita writes his cousin in Samoa about his new friends. "There's Mia," he begins, "the girl **who** sat with me on the first day. She's the one **who** laughs at her own jokes. Then there's James, the boy **who** sits behind me in maths — he's the one **who** keeps dropping his pencil to make me laugh."

"And there's Aroha, the girl **whose** family runs the café next to school. She always gives me a biscuit **that** her grandmother makes. Oh, and Mr Patel, the teacher **who** noticed I was quiet and put me in the art club."

Tevita reads it back. Every person in his new life has a little relative clause attached — a small description, a piece of "which one". A school full of strangers has become a group of people **who** all have a story.

WHO · FOR PEOPLE Nearly every sentence uses *who* to describe people. Notice how Tevita uses it to answer "which person?" — "the girl **who** sat with me", "the boy **who** sits behind me". Classic Use 1.

STORY TWO · THE MARKET THAT RAISED A FAMILY

Amara, 15 · Lagos

On Saturday mornings, Amara goes to Balogun Market with her mother. It's the market **that** raised three generations of her family. Her grandmother shopped here. Her mother shopped here. Now Amara carries the bag.

"Get the yams **which** Auntie Chidinma sells," her mother reminds her. "The ones **that** have the yellow label. And the tomatoes **which** come from Oyo — they're sweeter."

Today Amara finds a new thing: small dried peppers **that** her mother has never mentioned. The seller, a young man **who** can't be more than twenty, tells her they are from his grandmother's village. She buys a handful.

At home, her mother tries one and pauses. "These are the peppers **which** your *late* grandmother used to grow," she says softly. "We haven't tasted them in years." A thing **that** was lost, found again in a market stall.

WHICH · THAT · FOR THINGS Amara's story uses *which* and *that* almost interchangeably for products. "The yams **which** Auntie sells" = "The yams **that** Auntie sells". Both correct — *that* sounds slightly more casual.

STORY THREE · A WALK THROUGH MEMORY

Selin, 15 · Istanbul

Selin's grandmother visits from İzmir once a year, and every time, they take the same walk through old Beyoğlu. Her grandmother, *Nine*, grew up here in the 1960s. She points at everything.

"This is the street **where** your grandfather and I first met. There was a bakery **which** is now a phone shop, and he was standing outside it. That's the balcony **where** my mother used to hang the laundry. And there — that window upstairs — that's the room **where** your mother was born."

"What about that building?" Selin asks, pointing at a faded pink one. "Ah," says Nine. "That's the school **where** I learned to read. The classroom **where** I first wrote my name is on the third floor. My teacher was a woman **whose** husband had gone to America."

Selin writes it down on her phone. Years from now, she thinks, I'll walk here with my own grandchild. I'll say: this is the city **where** I grew up. This is the language **which** I spoke first.

WHERE · FOR PLACES Selin's story anchors every memory in a place, so *where* appears again and again. Notice how *where* replaces "in that place": "the street **where** we met" = "the street in which we met" (more formal).

STORY FOUR · THE LETTERS IN THE ATTIC

Aleksa, 16 · Belgrade

In Aleksa's grandparents' attic, there is a wooden box **whose** lid is carved with flowers. Nobody in the family opens it. "It belonged to *praded*," his grandfather says — his great-grandfather, a man **whose** photograph Aleksa has seen only twice.

One rainy Sunday, Aleksa finally opens it. Inside there are letters. Dozens. Some are tied with ribbon. Each one has a name on the front. "Dragica." Aleksa doesn't know anyone **whose** name is Dragica.

He brings a letter downstairs. His grandmother puts on her glasses. "This is from a woman **whose** family your great-grandfather loved very much, before the war. They wrote to each other for years. Her parents didn't approve — she was from a village **which** was far from here, with a family **whose** religion was different."

"What happened?" Aleksa asks. "She married someone else. So did he. They lost touch. But he kept every letter **that** she ever sent him." His grandmother folds the paper carefully. "The things **which** we love never really leave us."

WHOSE · FOR POSSESSION The most advanced pronoun: *whose* replaces *his, her, their*. "The woman **whose** family he loved" = "her family he loved". Trickier than *who*, but essential for showing belonging.

V Practice

Choose the right relative pronoun

Choose the correct relative pronoun for each sentence. Coloured tags indicate which category the answer belongs to.

LEGEND: WHO · people WHICH · things THAT · both WHERE · places WHOSE · owning

1. She's the teacher ____ taught us maths last year. **WHO · people**
 A *which* B *who* C *where*
2. This is the book ____ won the prize. **WHICH · things**
 A *which* B *who* C *whose*
3. That's the café ____ we meet every Saturday. **WHERE · places**
 A *which* B *who* C *where*
4. He's the boy ____ bike was stolen. **WHOSE · owning**
 A *who* B *whose* C *which*
5. I have a friend ____ lives in Japan. **WHO · people**

- A *which* B *who* C *where*

6. The film _____ we watched yesterday was brilliant. **THAT · both**
 A *that* B *who* C *whose*
7. That's the village _____ my grandparents were born. **WHERE · places**
 A *which* B *who* C *where*
8. She's the girl _____ mother is a pilot. **WHOSE · owning**
 A *who* B *whose* C *which*

VI

Speaking

Describe people & places in your life

Tell me about someone ... tell me about somewhere...

ANSWER EACH PROMPT IN A FULL SENTENCE, USING A RELATIVE CLAUSE

Don't just name someone — describe them. Start with the noun, then add **who / which / that / where / whose** to give extra information. "My best friend is **Zeynep**, **who** lives on the same street as me..."

1. Tell me about a friend *who* makes you laugh. What does this person do that's funny?
2. Describe an app *which* you couldn't live without. Why do you love it?
3. Think of a place *where* you felt really happy. What happened there?
4. Tell me about someone *whose* style you admire. What is it about them?
5. Describe a book, film, or song *that* changed how you think about something.

MODEL DIALOGUE — DESCRIBING A FRIEND & A PLACE

A: "Tell me about a friend *who* makes you laugh."

B: "That's easy — my cousin Can. He's the guy *who* does impressions of every teacher in our school. He's also the one *whose* laugh is louder than his jokes!"

A: "Is there a place *where* you always meet up?"

B: "Yes — there's a small park *which* is behind our building. It has a bench *that* we've been sitting on for years."

A: "Sounds like a friend *whose* company is worth keeping."

Test your relative clauses — Quick Check

Choose the best answer. 8 questions.

Q1 OF 8 · PEOPLE**"She's the girl ____ lives next door."**

- A which
- B who
- C where
- D whose

Q2 OF 8 · PLACES**"This is the school ____ my brother studies."**

- A which
- B who
- C where
- D whose

Q3 OF 8 · THE CLASSIC MISTAKE**Which sentence is *incorrect*?**

- A The boy who lives next door is my cousin.
- B I love the film that won the Oscar.
- C That's the café where we met.
- D The boy who he lives next door is my cousin.

Q4 OF 8 · POSSESSION**"He's the friend ____ sister works at the zoo."**

- A who
- B whose
- C which
- D where

Q5 OF 8 · THINGS**"I lost the book ____ you gave me."**

- A which
- B who
- C whose
- D when

Q6 OF 8 · READING RECALL**In Story One, how does Tevita describe Aroha?**

- A The girl who lives in Auckland.
- B The girl which is in my class.
- C The girl whose family runs the café.
- D The girl that paints everything blue.

Q7 OF 8 · BOTH WORK?**Which relative pronoun works for both people and things in casual English?**

- A who
- B that
- C whose
- D where

Q8 OF 8 · COMBINE THE PAIR**"I bought a jacket. *It* was on sale." → Combine with a relative clause:**

- A I bought a jacket which was on sale.
- B I bought a jacket who was on sale.
- C I bought a jacket where was on sale.
- D I bought a jacket it was on sale.

Answer Key

PRACTICE (PART VI)

1. B 2. A 3. C 4. B 5. B 6. A 7. C 8. B

QUIZ (PART IX)

Q1. B Q2. C Q3. D Q4. B Q5. A Q6. C Q7. B Q8. A