

Sentence Development Tutorial

Tutorial 19: Adjective Clauses

Choosing the Correct Perspective Correcting Perspective Shifts

This Tutorial includes two files:

- **Lesson (19a_Adjective_Clauses_Lesson)**

In order to learn the material presented in this tutorial more effectively, as you read you should take notes in a place that you can reference later. If it is convenient, you could print the tutorial and annotate it so you can keep it for future reference.

- **Exercises (19b_Adjective_Clauses_Exercises** – located in the same area as the lesson)

- It has highlighted areas for you to answer the exercises using an application such as Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Download and save this file as your own; you will share it with an instructor after you complete the lesson and exercises.

Please contact the Writing Center with any questions or difficulties:

csmtwc@smccd.edu or 650-574-6436.

Adjective Clauses

Consider the following sentences:

- A. I cannot find the man from the repair shop. He helped me fix my car yesterday.
- B. I cannot find the man from the repair shop that helped me fix my car yesterday.

In your notes, explain which writing is better, A or B, and why.

As you may have noticed, the sentences in A are short, choppy, and disconnected. On the other hand, the sentence in B, connects the ideas in those two sentences smoothly. Instead of using two sentences to convey the information about the man from the repair shop, the writer has combined the sentences using an **adjective clause**: **that helped me fix my car yesterday**.

An adjective clause describes a noun in the same sentence. In this case, the adjective clause “**that helped me fix my car yesterday**” describes the man from the repair shop with extra, descriptive information without the writer having to create a new sentence.

Understanding how an adjective clause works is easiest if you recognize the sentence that contains the adjective clause as a transformed combination of two separate sentences.

In both A and B, a pronoun represents the noun, **man**. In A, the pronoun, **he**, is the man from the repair shop. In sentence, B, the pronoun, **that**, is also the man from the repair shop. The pronoun **that** allows the writer to combine the first two sentences into one. Pronouns that begin adjectives clauses are called **relative pronouns**.

Consider the next two sentences.

- A. The photographer asked Alejandro and Jaime to the party. She works for *Time*.
- B. The photographer **who works for *Time*** asked Alejandro and Jaime to the party.

In A, the pronoun, **she**, is the photographer. In the combined sentence, B, the relative pronoun, **who**, is also the photographer. The relative pronoun, **who**, begins the adjective clause, **who works for *Time***, and allows the writer to combine the two sentences into one.

Principle I: To combine two separate sentences into a single sentence with an adjective clause, you must change the pronoun into a **relative pronoun** like *that*, *who*, or *which*.

Creating Adjective Clauses

This is a list of the relative pronouns that begin adjective clauses, the kinds of nouns that each relative pronoun can refer to, and the pronoun that each relative pronoun can replace in a combined sentence.

RELATIVE PRONOUN	REFERS TO	REPLACES	USAGE	EXAMPLE
Who	people or animals	she, he, they	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject of clause 	Fido, <u>who</u> loves to run fast, is a very large black dog. Fido is a very large black dog. <u>He</u> loves to run fast. (subject)
Whom	people or animals	her, him, them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Object of verb or preposition within clause Remember the M > Who<u>m</u> = hi<u>m</u>. 	Fido, <u>whom</u> I personally trained, works as a guide dog. Fido works as a guide dog. I personally trained <u>him</u> . (object)
Which	things	it, they, them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be subject or object 	George bought a used car <u>which/that</u> gave him endless problems. George bought a used car. <u>It</u> gave him endless problems. (Subject) George bought a car <u>which/that</u> he thought he would like. George bought a car. He thought he would like <u>it</u> . (object)
That	people or things	she, he, they, it; her, him, them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be subject or object 	He has found a mechanic <u>that/who</u> does excellent work. He has found a mechanic. <u>He</u> does excellent work.
Whose	people or things	her, his, their; its	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possessive 	The mechanic works in a garage <u>whose</u> sign is broken. The mechanic works in a garage. <u>Its</u> sign is broken.
Where	place	there here		The mechanic works at the garage <u>where</u> all the locals hang out. The mechanic works at the garage. All the locals hang out <u>there</u> .
Preposition + Whom	person	her, him, them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be careful not to repeat the preposition. 	The salesperson <u>from whom</u> George bought his car was a jerk. The salesperson was a jerk. George bought his car from <u>him</u> .
Preposition + Which	thing	it, they, them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be careful not to repeat the preposition. 	The credit card <u>which</u> he paid <u>with</u> was declined. The credit card was declined. He paid <u>with it</u> .

Please open your 19b exercises file and complete **Exercise 1**.

Placement of Adjective Clauses and Relative Pronouns

Adjective clauses must be placed ***right after*** the nouns they modify. For example, to make the second sentence below into an adjective clause, we have to ask the question: what does **it** refer to—the chair or the TV?

The chair is next to the TV. **It** is older than my little sister.

If **it** refers to the chair, then put the adjective clause ***right after*** the word **chair**:

The **chair, which is older than my little sister**, is next to the TV.

If **it** refers to the TV, then put the adjective clause ***right after*** the word TV:

The chair is next to the **TV, which is older than my sister**.

Another point to remember about adjective clauses is that sometimes the pronoun you are replacing may not come at the beginning of the sentence.

For example:

Laura bought some **tomato paste**. She planned to use **it** to make spaghetti sauce.

Laura bought a can of **tomato paste, which** she planned to use to make spaghetti sauce.

Here, the pronoun being replaced, **it**, is in the middle of the sentence. It is important to place the adjective clause that begins with the relative pronoun ***right after*** the noun that it modifies, in this case, **which**.

You would not simply want to replace **it** with **which**. For example, consider this incorrect sentence:

Laura bought a can of **tomato paste** she planned to use **which** to make spaghetti sauce.

Principle II: It is important to place the adjective clause ***right after*** the noun that it modifies. Always put the relative pronoun that replaces the pronoun at the ***beginning of the adjective clause***.

Please open your 19b exercises file and complete Exercises 2 and 3.

Punctuating Adjective Clauses

Consider the following sentences.

The man **who wears the brown beret** owns six cats.

This man lives in the house **where my best friend used to live**.

In the first sentence, as well as describing the man, the adjective clause **who wears the brown beret** helps the reader **identify** exactly which man the writer is talking about. Similarly, in the second sentence, the clause **where my best friend used to live** helps to **identify** in which house the man lives.

On the other hand, consider these sentences.

Maria Torres, **who works at IBM**, was recently promoted.

Golden Gate Park, **which borders Ocean Beach**, has a museum, a tea garden, and an arboretum.

In these examples, **Maria Torres** and **Golden Gate Park** are very specific nouns, and the adjective clauses aren't required to identify them. These adjective clauses merely provide additional descriptive information.

Principle III: Generally, if the adjective clause is helping to identify the noun it describes, do *not* use commas to set it off. However, if the adjective clause is only helping to describe the noun but is not identifying it, use commas to set off the adjective clause.

Please open your 19b exercises file and complete Exercise 4.

Some Rules for Using Adjective Clauses

- Use **who** only for **people** or **animals** (to replace **he**, **she**, or **they**).
- Use **whom** only for **people** or **animals** (to replace **him**, **her**, or **them**).
- Use **which** only for **things** (to replace **it**, **they**, or **them**), whether those things are the subject or the object of the sentence.
- Use **that** for **people** or **things** (to replace **he**, **she**, **it**, **they**; **him**, **her**, **them**), whether those people or things are the subject or the object of the sentence; however, do not use **that** after a preposition.
- Use **whose** for **people** or **things** (to replace **his**, **her**, **their**; **its**)
- **Where** refers to **place** (to replace **there** and **here**).

Please open your 19b exercises file and complete Exercise 5.

Final Activity

Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay where your teacher has graded and marked your adjective clauses then try to incorporate adjective clauses into your own writing.
2. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor working in the Writing Center. To make this appointment, sign up using the same method you use to make essay conference appointments. Be sure to include a comment or note that you are meeting about a tutorial.
3. During this appointment, the instructor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to the exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.