

U. *Wh*- CLAUSES

Questions

Who, what, which, whose, when, where, and why are used to begin questions.

Who and **what** are followed by the *main verb* when they are the subject of the sentence.

EXAMPLES: **What** caused this problem? **Who** knows about it?

Like **which, when, where, and why**, they are followed by an *auxiliary verb* when they are not the subject.

EXAMPLES: **Who** did you see at the party? **Where** did you find the bag? **When** can I get it from you?

Whose must be followed by a *noun*. **Which** is followed by a *noun* when it is used as an adjective.

EXAMPLE: **Whose or which** car did you come in tonight?

Relative clauses

These relative pronouns are used after a noun to identify it or give more information about it. There is usually no punctuation mark before the relative clause if it is telling us *which* person or thing is meant, but there are commas before and after the clause if it tells us more about something already mentioned.

| Relative pronoun | What it describes | Example |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| <i>which / that</i> | <i>A thing</i> | <i>This hotel, which I told you about last week, is very cheap.</i> |
| <i>who</i> | <i>A person</i> | <i>Jack, who phoned you this morning, is at the door.</i> |
| <i>when</i> | <i>A time noun</i> | <i>I get very tired in December, when I am busiest.</i> |
| <i>where</i> | <i>A place noun</i> | <i>Do you know the street where he lives?</i> |
| <i>why</i> | <i>The reason</i> | <i>I know the reason why you did this.</i> |
| <i>how</i> | <i>The method</i> | <i>I don't know how to fix radios.</i> |

Whom is sometimes used in formal writing. It can not be the subject of the verb in the clause.

EXAMPLE: The publishers **whom** I met were impressed by my book.

In speech and informal writing, **that** can be used instead of **which**, if the clause identifies the person or thing we mean ⁽¹⁾, and does not give extra information about someone or something already identified ⁽²⁾.

EXAMPLES: ¹ This is the knife **that** I use most. ² This knife, **which** I use often, is quite sharp.

If there is a *preposition*, it will go at the end of the clause.

EXAMPLES: This is the knife **that or which** I was looking *for*.

When **that or which** is the object of the verb, it is sometimes left out, if the clause identifies the person or thing we mean. **That** could have been left out of any of the sentences above, except that marked ².

Noun clauses

A clause starting with any of these words, or **whether**, can be the object of a verb. No punctuation is needed.

| Subject | Verb | Object |
|---------|-------------|--|
| John | thought | <i>that he had won the prize.</i> |
| I | don't know* | <i>why you did that.</i> |
| My wife | asked | <i>whether I would come home late.</i> |

* The verb can be negative. *Don't know* stands for *do not know*.

Exercise

Fill in each gap with **which, that, who, whose, when, where, how** or **why**. Add commas if necessary.

- textbooks did you bring today? told you to do that?
- I have to finish this essay by Monday we have to hand in all our assignments.
- Michael showed me to use the computer programme.
- Auckland is New Zealand's largest city has a serious traffic problem.
- I agree telling the teacher was the right thing to do.
- Devon Road Jack lives is one of the longest streets in the city.
- Ask Mr Smith is the teacher in charge of lost property whether your bag has been handed in.
- The teacher asked Janet was not at school. He also wanted to know she was.
- I have been trying to find out swimsuit this is. I don't know has used the pool today.