

Lesson 31 English Relative Pronoun Worksheet

Nomen mihi est _____

Relative Pronouns

Relative Pronouns are different from both personal pronouns (I, you, he, she, it, we, you (pl.), they, etc.) and interrogative pronouns (who?, whose?, whom?, which?, what?) because relative pronouns refer to an antecedent. Relative pronouns can join small sentences into longer sentences. A long series of short sentences can be used to create a staccato effect when this is desired by the author to make a particular point, but it is usually best to vary sentence length in paragraphs to make the discourse smoother and less repetitive.

Two sentences can be joined into one:

I saw the horses. The horses were in the road. I saw the horses that were in the road.
I saw the horses which were in the road.

In the last sentence *that* evidently refers to *the horses* which is called the antecedent. The antecedent of a relative pronoun is the noun, pronoun, or other word or expression for which the relative pronoun stands. The antecedent usually precedes the relative pronoun. The relative pronoun will agree with its antecedent in gender and number, but will take its case from its use in the relative clause.

She is the queen. She lived in Africa. She is the queen who lived in Africa.
The boys like the books. The books tell about geography. The boys like the books which tell about geography.
These are the cookies. I wanted the cookies. These are the cookies that I wanted.

In these sentences *who*, *which*, and *that* are relative pronouns. The relative pronoun *who* usually refers to persons, but sometimes refers to animals. In English *who* can be declined much like Latin pronouns and nouns, except that there is no ablative case in English.

	singular	plural
nominative	<i>who</i>	<i>who</i>
genitive	<i>whose</i>	<i>whose</i>
dative	<i>to/for whom</i>	<i>to/for whom</i>
accusative	<i>whom</i>	<i>whom</i>

The relative pronoun *which* usually refers to animals, things, or ideas and the relative pronoun *that* can refer to persons, animals, things, or ideas. *Which* has the same form for all cases, except the genitive (*whose*), and *that* is not declined.

There is another word in English that is considered to be a relative pronoun—*what*. This relative pronoun usually has an indefinite antecedent and will not be discussed here except to give an example.
This is an example of what you should not be doing in the school building.

Relative clauses

When sentences have been joined together with a relative pronoun, one of the sentences becomes the main sentence and the other becomes the relative clause. It is important to be able to recognize the main sentence and the relative clause in a sentence. The relative pronoun usually follows its antecedent (the word it stands for) and begins the relative clause. The relative clause contains the secondary sentence.

Sentence with relative clause in italics	Main sentence	Secondary sentence
The boy <i>whom I visited</i> was my cousin.	The boy was my cousin.	I visited the boy.
I know the town <i>in which he was born</i> .	I know the town.	He was born in the town.
Have you seen the girl <i>to whom I gave the books</i> ?	Have you seen the girl?	I gave the books to the girl.