

Omitting Relative Pronouns

THE RELATIVE PRONOUN CANNOT BE OMITTED WHEN IT IS THE SUBJECT OF THE SENTENCE.		
Noun, subject of the main clause	RELATIVE PRONOUN	VERB + REST OF RELATIVE CLAUSE
The woman	that	spoke at the meeting was very knowledgeable.
What's the name of the girl	who/that	won the tennis tournament?
I drive a car	that	was made in Germany.
English is a language	which	has a very complicated grammar.
There's the dog	that	bit my brother.
She's the woman	who/that	cuts my hair.

THE RELATIVE PRONOUN CAN BE OMITTED WHEN IT IS THE OBJECT OF THE SENTENCE.		
Noun, subject of the main clause	RELATIVE PRONOUN	PRONOUN + VERB + REST OF RELATIVE CLAUSE
It was the best film	(that)	I've ever seen.
The professor,	(whom)	I respect, recently received an award.
I still remember the day	(when)	I received my first paycheck.
The water	(which/that)	I drank was very cold
The film	(that)	we saw last week was awful
The book	(which/ that)	I read was very interesting.

THE RELATIVE PRONOUN CAN BE OMITTED If the relative clause contains the verb 'be' + any of the following :		
Noun, subject of the main clause	RELATIVE PRONOUN	Pronoun + verb + rest of relative clause
be + a past participle [a passive form]		
A person	(who has been)	tricked once is careful the next time.
The student	(that is)	chosen as winner will get a prize.
be + a present participle [a continuous form]		
The woman	(who is)	talking to my wife is from Ireland.
The family	(who are)	living in the house are very rich.
be + an adjective phrase		
The man	(who is)	interested in your car will telephone later.
be + a prepositional phrase		
The books	(which are)	on the table have been read.

THE RELATIVE PRONOUN CAN BE OMITTED:

RULE#1 only in defining relative clauses (without commas).

RULE#2 If the relative pronoun is followed by a noun or pronoun!

The book **(which)** I read last week was fantastic.

WHICH + I = RELATIVE PRONOUN + PRONOUN

The woman **(who)** the police arrested was found guilty of first-degree murder.

WHO + THE POLICE = RELATIVE PRONOUN + NOUN

THE RELATIVE PRONOUN CANNOT BE OMITTED:

RULE#1 in non-defining relative clauses (with commas).

Gina, **whom** I met in the shop, invited me for a cup of tea. **CORRECT**

Gina, I met in the shop, invited me for a cup of tea. **INCORRECT**

RULE#2 in defining relative clauses if the relative pronoun is followed by a verb!

I'm reading the Hunger Games **which was written** by Suzanne Collins.

WHICH + WAS WRITTEN = RELATIVE PRONOUN + VERB

RULE#3 after preposition + whom/which (at which, with whom, among whom etc.)

This is the house **in which** she was murdered. **(FORMAL) IN WHICH cannot be omitted!**

Decide whether or not the relative pronoun can be omitted in the following sentences.

- 1) This was the hotel **that** we stayed in for two weeks.
- 2) She showed me the emeralds **which** she had brought back from South Africa.
- 3) The smartphone **that** costs £200 is very good.
- 4) Mrs. Smith, **who** is very smart, lives on the fourth floor.
- 5) This is the car **that** John bought at an auction.
- 6) My colleague with **whom** I'm doing the project should be here as soon as possible.
- 7) That's the woman **whose** house has been broken into.
- 8) A doctor is a person **who** looks after people's health.
- 9) My new motorbike, **which** I paid a few thousand euros for, is not running well.
- 10) Where is the letter **that** arrived this morning?

Decide whether or not the relative pronoun can be omitted in the following sentences.

1) This was the hotel **that** we stayed in for two weeks. ⇒ **Can be omitted**
// cannot be omitted THAT + WE = RELATIVE PRONOUN + PRONOUN

2) She showed me the emeralds **which** she had brought back from South Africa. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted WHICH + SHE = RELATIVE PRONOUN + PRONOUN**

3) The smartphone **that** costs £200 is very good. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted THAT + COSTS = RELATIVE PRONOUN + VERB**

4) Mrs. Smith, **who** is very smart, lives on the fourth floor. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted The relative pronoun cannot be omitted in non-defining relative clauses (with commas)!**

5) This is the car **that** John bought at an auction. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted THAT + JOHN = RELATIVE PRONOUN + NOUN**

6) My colleague with **whom** I'm doing the project should be here as soon as possible. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted The relative pronoun cannot be omitted after preposition + whom/which (at which, with whom, among whom etc.)!**

7) That's the woman **whose** house has been broken into. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted WHOSE is a determiner and can never be omitted!**

8) A doctor is a person **who** looks after people's health. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted WHO + LOOKS = RELATIVE PRONOUN + VERB**

9) My new motorbike, **which** I paid a few thousand euros for, is not running well. ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted The relative pronoun cannot be omitted in non-defining relative clauses (with commas)!**

10) Where is the letter **that** arrived this morning? ⇒ **Can be omitted** **// cannot be omitted THAT + ARRIVED = RELATIVE PRONOUN + VERB**