

Using relative clauses

Relative pronouns can be used to combine two clauses into one sentence. A relative pronoun acts as the subject or object of its verb. It also serves as a conjunction connecting the two clauses.

Study the examples given below.

The pen has been stolen.

I bought it yesterday.

We can combine these two sentences using a relative pronoun. Since the noun pen refers to a thing, we can use the relative pronoun which or that.

The pen which I bought yesterday has been stolen. OR The pen that I bought yesterday has been stolen.

Another example is given below.

The house is small.

We live in the house.

The house which we live in is small. OR The house that we live in is small.

Now consider another example.

The boy was called Jack.

He cleaned the table.

Here the pronoun he refers to a person. Therefore, we use the relative pronoun who or that to combine these two clauses.

The boy who cleaned the table was called Jack. OR The boy that cleaned the table was called Jack.

The man is my uncle.

You met him yesterday.

Here the pronoun him is the object of the verb met. We can replace it with the object relative pronoun whom or that.

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The man whom you met yesterday is my uncle. OR The man that you met yesterday is my uncle.

Note that whom is only used in a very formal style. In an informal style, we use who.

The man who you met yesterday is my uncle.