

Who and whom

Whom is the object form of the relative pronoun who. Both who and whom are only used to refer to people.

Students are often confused about whom. If you don't know how exactly is whom used, don't worry. In modern English, whom is considered rather formal and old-fashioned. You might still come across this word in academic and official writing. Nonetheless, it is something that you can totally eliminate from your writing.

'Who' is the modern equivalent that can be used in both formal and informal contexts.

For example consider the sentences given below.

You were speaking to a woman.

She is my boss.

Here the noun woman is the object of the preposition to. We can combine these two clauses using whom.

The woman to whom you were speaking is my boss.

Good to know

When a relative pronoun is used as the object of the verb, it will be immediately followed by another noun.

In the above example, the noun you follows the relative pronoun whom.

In a less formal style, we can also write:

The woman who you were speaking to is my boss.

Note that the preposition now goes at the end of the clause 'who you were speaking to'.

In an informal style, the relative pronoun who can be dropped and the sentence will still make sense.

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The woman you were speaking to is my boss.