

Lesson 2.6 Relative Clauses: Clauses that Modify Nouns

key words: relative clauses, relative pronouns, sentence combining

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1i Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/i>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1a Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*). <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/4/1/a>

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3a Expand, combine, and reduce sentences for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/5/3/a>

Relative clauses are clauses (so they have a subject and a predicate) that give us more information about the noun.

Relative clauses, bracketed below, follow the noun that they modify and are usually introduced by **relative pronouns** (*that, who, which, when, where*).

The store was out of those beans [that I like in my soup].

relative clause modifies *those beans*

The girl [who I met last week] was at the game too.

relative clause modifies *the girl*

We're having the fish [that we caught] for dinner.

relative clause modifies *the fish*

That man [who is standing over there] is my uncle.

relative clause modifies *that man*

The relative pronouns, *who, what, which, whose*, as well as those sometimes called relative adverbs, like *where* and *when*, stand in for the noun that each is describing, as pronouns do. In the following example, *who* refers back to *that man*, but *that man* is not part of the relative clause itself. Instead, *who* functions as the **subject** of the clause, replacing, or referring back to, *that man*.

That man [who is standing over there] is my uncle.

And in this example *who* (or *whom*) refers back to *the girl* and functions as the **direct object** of the relative clause.

The girl [who I met last week] was at the game too.

We can use relative clauses to combine information that could otherwise be expressed in separate clauses into a single, complex sentence:

My friend tells a lot of jokes. He makes me laugh.

My friend, who makes me laugh, tells a lot of jokes.

Such combining of simple sentences can make your writing more interesting and more fluid. Combine the following simple sentences using relative clauses. What kinds of changes do you have to make?

I like peanut butter. My dad bought some peanut butter yesterday.

We drove to Yellowstone. We saw three bears in Yellowstone.

My dog is a beagle. My dog's name is Barney.

