

COMPLEX SENTENCES WITH RELATIVE PRONOUNS

A Focus on Punctuation

Complex Sentences

Definition:

Complex sentences are comprised of one independent clause and one or more dependent clause.

Independent clauses:

- can stand alone as a complete sentence
- contain a subject and a verb and
- express a complete thought.

Dependent clauses:

- contain a subject and a verb
- cannot stand alone as a complete sentence
- do not express a complete thought

Types of complex sentences

There are two types of complex sentences.

- Subordinating conjunctions

- Example: *When the fish ate the bait, Martina reeled it in.*

- Relative pronouns

- Example: *Email, which has been popular for many years, is losing its status to text and instant messaging.*

- *Who, which, that* are most common relative pronouns

Examples with relative pronouns:

- All cars *that have bad brakes* should be kept off the streets.
- Francine, *who is a police officer*, recommends regular maintenance on brakes.
- British Columbia, *which is to the north of Washington*, is very beautiful.

Punctuating Complex Sentences with relative pronouns

- **That:** No commas are necessary (used with restrictive clauses)
 - ▣ Example: The freshman did the homework *that* was assigned.
- **Who, which:** Commas *may* be necessary
 - ▣ Commas are necessary when the information in the clause is non-restrictive – when the information is extra and not necessary to the meaning of the sentence. (specific noun)
 - Example: Angie, *who* is a stylist, is very young.
 - ▣ Commas are not necessary when the information in the clause is restrictive – when the information is necessary to the meaning of the sentence.
 - Example: Men *who* stay home to take care of children are more common today.

More details and examples:

- If the relative pronoun refers to a general noun, do NOT use commas.
 - ▣ People *who study a lot* receive good grades.
 - ▣ Women *who are vegetarian* often eat too much soy.
- If the relative pronoun refers to a specific (proper) noun, use commas.
 - ▣ *Martina, who studies a lot,* receives good grades
 - ▣ I'm going to see Rita, *who is a heart surgeon.*

More Examples:

- Rosa Montero, *whom I admire*, has written more than 10 novels.
- Authors *who write every day* are very successful.
- I love to read books by Douglas Coupland, *who is one of my favorite authors*.
- The novels *that I read* are often suspenseful.
- *Beautiful and Dark*, which is a short novel, received a lot of good reviews.