

**General**

Relative pronouns are words like 'who', 'which', 'where' and 'when'. They add information to sentences, and are a feature of academic writing. For example, you can use them to avoid too many simple sentences.

**Who/which**

'who' refers to a person<sup>1</sup>; 'which' refers to a thing<sup>2</sup>.

You can often use 'that' instead of 'who' or 'which', but it is less formal in writing. Also, it can be incorrect for grammar reasons. So in this unit, it isn't used.

You can leave out 'who'/'which' if they are followed by a subject<sup>3</sup> ie person or thing.

**When/where**

These can also be used as relative pronouns as well as their normal use as question words.

'when' refers to a time<sup>4</sup>; 'where' refers to a place<sup>5</sup>.

You can only use 'when'/'where' if they are followed by a subject<sup>3</sup>.

'where' and 'which' can both be used for places but 'which' needs an extra preposition<sup>6</sup>.

**Whose**

'whose' refers to a person's 'possessions'<sup>7</sup>. This includes relatives, friends etc.

**Progression**

You can use these words to build up your sentences. When sentences get longer, it is useful to use commas<sup>8</sup> to group information together, to divide the more important from the less important.

**Who**

The woman got the job.  
She was highly qualified.

The woman<sup>1</sup> who got the job was highly qualified.

The woman who they<sup>3</sup> employed was highly qualified.

=  
The woman they employed was highly qualified.

**Which**

The company gave her the job.  
It was called Smithson's.

The company<sup>2</sup> which gave her the job was called Smithson's.

The company which she<sup>3</sup> worked for<sup>6</sup> was called Smithson's.

=  
The company she worked for was called Smithson's.

**When**

It was 2004<sup>4</sup> when she<sup>3</sup> started her job.

**Where**

The company<sup>5</sup> where she<sup>3</sup> worked was called Smithson's.

**Whose**

She met a man whose sister<sup>7</sup> worked for the same company.

**Progression**

The business was a huge success.  
The business which he had founded,<sup>8</sup> was a huge success.  
The business was a huge success,<sup>8</sup> which did not surprise anyone.

Investors made a profit in high risk industries.  
Investors who knew the market,<sup>8</sup> made a profit in high-risk industries.  
Investors,<sup>8</sup> who can often be very cautious,<sup>8</sup> made a profit in high-risk industries.

The manager left because of ill health.  
The manager whose job was highly stressful,<sup>8</sup> left because of ill health.  
The manager,<sup>8</sup> whose job was in marketing,<sup>8</sup> left because of ill health.