

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns make up another class of pronouns. They are used to connect relative clauses to independent clauses. Often, they introduce additional information about something mentioned in the sentence. Relative pronouns include *that*, *what*, *which*, *who*, and *whom*. Traditionally, *who* refers to people, and *which* and *that* refer to animals or things.

Example The woman **who** called earlier didn't leave a message. All the dogs **that** got adopted today will be loved. My car, **which** is nearly twenty years old, still runs well.

Whether you need commas with *who*, *which*, and *that* depends on whether the clause is restrictive or nonrestrictive.

Who vs. Whom—Subject and Object Pronouns

Now that we've talked about relative pronouns, let's tackle the one that causes the most confusion: [who vs. whom](#). *Who* is a subject pronoun, like *I*, *he*, *she*, *we*, and *they*. *Whom* is an object pronoun, like *me*, *him*, *her*, *us* and *them*. When the pronoun is the object of a verb or preposition, the object form is the one you want. Most people don't have much trouble with the objective case of personal pronouns because they usually come immediately after the verb or preposition that modifies it.

Incorrect Please mail it **to I**.

Correct Please mail it **to me**.

Incorrect Ms. Higgins **caught they** passing notes.

Correct Ms. Higgins **caught them** passing notes.

Incorrect Is this cake for **we**?

Correct Is this cake for **us**?

Whom is trickier, though, because it usually comes *before* the verb or preposition that modifies it.

Correct **Whom** did you speak **to** earlier?

Correct A man, **whom** I have never **seen** before, was asking about you.

Incorrect **Whom** should I say is calling?