

6d -- Relative Clauses 4

Defining and non-defining relative clauses

Relative Clauses 1

'**Defining**' (skilgreinandi) relative clauses identify nouns: these clauses tell us which person, thing, etc. the speaker means.

- I spoke to the woman **who owns the hotel**.
 - (who owns the hotel tells us which woman)
- The house **which Sue has bought** is over 100 years old.
 - (which Sue has bought tells us which house)

Relative Clauses 2

‘**Non-defining**’ relative clauses do not tell us which person, thing, etc. the speaker means; these clauses give **more information** about a person or thing already identified (**aukaupplýsingar**)

- Ken’s mother, **who is 69**, has just passed her driving test.
 - (**who is 69** does not tell us which woman: we already know that it is Ken’s mother)
- Sue’s house, **which is in the centre of town**, is over 100 years old.
 - (**which is in the centre of town** does not tell us which house; we already know that it is Sue’s house)

Non-defining clauses are more common in a formal style, especially in writing. When we write these clauses, **we put commas (,)** at the **beginning of the clause** (and often at the end of the clause as well).

- Last weekend I met Sue, **who told me she was going on holiday soon**.
- Frank Morris, **who is one of my best friends**, has decided to go and live in France.

Relative Clauses 3

In a **non-defining clause** we always use **who** for people and **which** for things; we cannot use that.

- She gave me the key, **which I put in my pocket**.

– (Not: She gave me the key, that I put in my pocket.)

In a **non-defining clause** we **cannot leave out who or which**, even when they are the object (andlag) of the verb.

- My uncle John, **who lives in Manchester**, is coming to visit me next week.

– (He lives in Manchester. -- subject (frumlag))

- She gave me the key, **which I put into my pocket**.

– (I put it into my pocket. -- object (andlag))