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Quick and Handy Grammar Review: Adjective Clauses

Clauses and Phrases

A **clause** is a *group of words with a subject and a verb*. A **phrase** is a *group of words with no subject and an incomplete verb*. There are two types of clauses: an *independent* clause, which is a complete sentence, and a *dependent* clause, which requires an independent clause to make up a complete sentence. Dependent clauses function as nouns, adverbs, or adjectives.

The type of independent clause that we will examine in this lesson is the **adjective clause**. Because adjective clauses serve as adjectives, they describe nouns. They occur in three positions: after the subject, after the object of the verb, after the object of a preposition. For example:

Johnny Depp, **who is a Hollywood star**, is most famous for *Pirates of the Caribbean*. [the clause describes the **subject** *Johnny Depp*]

I called Joe Montana, **who used to be a football player**. [the clause describes the **object** *Joe Montana*]

I had a dream of my brother walking in front of the house **where I used to live**. [the clause describes the word *house*, which is the **object of the preposition** *of*]

Make sure that you always place the adjective clause right after the noun it describes.

I. Adjective Clause Forms

1. **who, that, which:** *as the subject of the adjective clause*
Kelly O'Rourke, who works at a vet's office, loves cats more than dogs.
The cold pizza that cost \$1 was old and tough, but delicious.
2. **who, whom, that, which, X (nothing):** *as the object of the adjective clause*
She is the woman whom the poodle bit on the finger.
The chicken that my cousin cooked was as black as tar.
My friend recommended *The Da Vinci Code*, which she read last year.
The woman I dated had a diamond piercing in her navel.
3. **when:** *always followed by a subject and verb*
I will never forget the day when my team won the soccer championship.
1999 is the year when she drank her first glass of beer.
4. **where:** *always followed by a subject and verb*
Paris is a place where you can see an old building next to a modern office.
Algeria is a country where the food is a mixture of French and Arabic.
5. **whose:** *always followed by a noun (used as a possessive)*
Felix Gomez, whose ears are permanently swollen, used to be a bad boxer.
The man whose dog is always barking refuses to listen to my complaints.
6. **quantity word + whom or which:** *(one of whom, several of whom, two of which)*
[Note: these forms are not very common and are very formal]
He has read three magazines, one of which he bought at the airport.
Enzo has three sisters, one of whom lives in Calgary.
7. **which:** *to modify the whole sentence*
His dog had four puppies, which made his tiny studio very crowded.
Nella studied all night, which made her exhausted all day today.

II. Punctuation of Adjective Clauses [Placement of Commas]

1. If the information is necessary for identification, **do NOT place a comma** in the sentence.
The man who married Gina sometimes cries when he looks at his wedding pictures.
The security guard chased the two men who had robbed the store.
The pigs which I saw at the zoo yesterday were sleeping in the mud.
2. If the information is NOT necessary for identification, **place a comma** in the sentence.
Prof. Jenkins, who teaches psychology, has written two books and many articles.
Mario left his laptop at Tourquaz Restaurant, where they have an internet café.
3. General fruits, vegetables, animals, meats, etc. **take a comma**
Pasta, which is made of wheat, is an important part of the Italian diet.
Ducks, which make strange noises, can swim, waddle, and fly.
My mother does not eat venison, which comes from deer.
4. Specific fruits, vegetables, animals, meats, etc. **do NOT take a comma**
The peach that Maria bought in the fruit store on 6th Street was as hard as a rock.
The turkey we ate for dinner last night was served with gravy and potatoes.
The monkey that I saw at the zoo was climbing all around the cage.
The cow that I saw in Kansas last year weighed more than 1,000 pounds.
5. When the adjective clause describes the general idea expressed in the independent clause, **a comma and which are used.**
Dina invented a popular app, which made her a rich woman.
The flight was two hours late, which meant that I missed my connecting flight.
The restaurant was crowded, which meant that we had to wait an hour to get a table.

Rules for Adjective Clauses

1. The adjective clause always goes **immediately after** the noun it modifies.
2. *Where* and *when* are **never** the subject of a clause. They are always followed by a noun or a pronoun.
3. *Whose* is always followed by a noun (because it is possessive).
4. When a comma is placed after a noun, **that** cannot be used. You must use **which**.
5. The verb in the adjective clause must **agree in number** with the noun it modifies.

Exercise 1:

The following is a description of a typical modern family. Try to fill in the missing words, paying close attention to parts of speech, verb tense, and correct word forms.

I think _____ (1) I have a typical modern family. I am 24 years old, and I _____ (2) two sisters and two _____ (3). I live in a very big house _____ (4) is located in Washington, DC. My father and mother _____ (5) divorced five years _____ (6), and I went to _____ (7) with my father. Last year, _____ (8) got married to a woman _____ (9) had three children of her own. Now we all live together in one home. Maria, _____ (10) is _____ (11) stepsister, is a twelve-year-old girl _____ (12) hair is long and curly. Tony, _____ (13) stepbrother, is very different. He is a very serious boy who plays video games _____ (14) are made by Sony. _____ (15) stepmother, _____ (16) is the manager of a fast food restaurant, is 18 years younger than my father. One month ago, my father and his wife had a baby boy, _____ (17) is my half brother. Last week, when my mother came to pick me up at my school, _____ (18) I major in psychology, I told my friend David, _____ (19) has a good sense of humor, "I have to run. My mother has come to _____ (20) me up." Harry looked at the woman, _____ (21) looked more like my sister _____ (22) my mother, and said, "Your mother looks like she is the same age as you! What an interesting _____ (23) you have!" And I think I do, _____ (24) makes life much more _____ (25).

Exercise 2:

Read the following selection and underline or highlight all the adjective clauses.

My favorite sport is played during the summer. It is a sport which requires nine players on each team.

The people who play this sport must be fast, brave, and intelligent. Players who are fast and brave will be able to react quickly to a ball that often travels at 90 miles (about 145 km) an hour or more. Players who are intelligent will be able to decide what to do before the ball comes to them, and will react quickly and correctly even when they cannot watch the other players.

My favorite sport is interesting to watch. People who watch the game have a chance to discuss the strategy of the teams and the quality of the players. Spectators who understand the game well know that they have to watch two places on the field at the same time: the place where the ball is and the place where the runner is. Wise spectators know that the players often make beautiful patterns on the field as they line up to relay the ball in order to catch a runner.

My favorite sport is baseball.

Exercise 3:

There are mistakes in the following sentences. Find, circle, and correct them. Rewrite the corrected sentences.

1. He used to live in Colombia, that is a Spanish-speaking country.

2. The woman who her name is Dina come from Tunisia.

3. Mitt Romney, who a politician from Massachusetts might run for president.

4. Henrietta never talk to people which don't speak her language.

5. Jim who work in a large company which located in northern Quebec.

6. Messi won two championships who was born in a small town in Argentina.

7. Barbara has a house that overlooking the river.

8. She will never forget the day when was her twenty-first birthday.

9. Ji Na comes from a place where is very cold almost all year.

10. Bollywood makes more films than Hollywood which is the movie capital of India.

Exercise 4:

Complete the following sentences using the information in parentheses. Be careful to use the correct verb tenses and to punctuate carefully.

1. John F. Kennedy who _____ was the youngest president in history. (JFK was assassinated in 1963.)
2. The pizzeria _____ served expensive food. (We ate there yesterday.)
3. _____ which made me very sad. (My dog died yesterday.)
4. Sunday is the day _____. (I sleep late on Sunday.)
5. Greta went to the mall without me, which _____. (It was not a nice thing to do.)
6. Marta is the type of boss _____. (Marta is easy to work with.)
7. Salmon is a meal _____. (I love salmon.)
8. Alexander Ovechkin _____ comes from Russia. (He is an excellent hockey player.)
9. Pizza _____ is my favorite food. (Pizza is inexpensive.)
10. Joe's sister lives in Paris _____. (Paris is the capital of France.)

Exercise 5:

Complete the following sentences using the information in parentheses. Be careful to use the correct verb tenses and to punctuate carefully.

1. I would never marry a person _____.
(smoke and drink too much)
2. My brother bought a dog _____.
(black and white)
3. The doctor _____ was from Pakistan.
(treat me)
4. She will never forget the day _____.
(get a promotion)
5. Rosa fell in love with the man _____.
(his brother works in Gino's restaurant)
6. Elephants _____ are the largest animals in the world.
(eat plants and bushes)
7. Last month, my brother bought a car _____.
(it cost \$12,000)
8. Nestor met a woman _____.
(she wrote two books)
9. The ring _____ was made of cubic zirconium, not real diamonds.
(Josie gave her daughter a ring)
10. Hank Crowley wore a jacket _____.
(the jacket had black and white stripes)

Exercise 6:

Formal Vs. Informal – Read the following sentences and analyze differences in levels of formality. Which is the most common? What is the effect of the first sentence in each group? Which one would you use in writing? In speaking? Is the word “whom” still common?

- _____ 1. a) The book about which I told you came out last year.
_____ b) The story I told you about was written in Chinese.
_____ c) The novel that I was talking about was published in Korea in 2007.
- _____ 2. a) The man about whom I was talking is sitting in the corner.
_____ b) The woman I was talking about is wearing the red dress.
_____ c) The person whom I told you about is my boss.
_____ d) The girl who I told you about works with me.
_____ e) The guy that I was telling you about is dating my friend.
- _____ 3. a) The home in which I was brought up was on the same street as my school.
_____ b) The house where I was raised had two floors.
_____ c) The house I grew up in had a large kitchen.

Exercise 7:

Sentence Structures – Punctuate the following sentences. Pay close attention to the rules on pages 2 and 3.

1. The man who stole my car was wearing a black mask.
2. Bill O’Grady comes from a small town which means that everyone knows everyone else.
3. She saw a picture of Joe’s brother Paul who has a scar on his nose.
4. The photograph in the magazine showed a woman whose hair was very short.
5. Henry has two sisters whose names are Nicolette and Anna.
6. Dr. Seismore who is a retired obstetrician still loves to talk to pregnant women.
7. The meal that Connie served last night was spicy which meant that I drank water all night.
8. Hal has fond memories of his hometown which is located on a lake.
9. Bobby met his girlfriend in Asti’s restaurant where the servers sing during the meal.
10. That is Betsy who I was telling you about five minutes ago.

Exercise 8:

Sentence Structures – Punctuate the following sentences. Pay close attention to the rules on pages 2 and 3.

1. The food that John cooked last night tasted very bad.
2. Enza is a vegetarian which means that she does not eat meat.
3. Charlie who loves fish eats just about anything.
4. George who is a Vietnam veteran supports most wars.
5. The student whose grammar book was left in the classroom is studying with Dr. Lopez.
6. Hyenas which live in Africa are very fast runners.
7. The bear Nestor shot last week is now on display in his living room.
8. Ken has two grandmothers who both live in London.
9. The man who sold Bob the stolen watch was arrested last week.
10. I have never been to Vietnam which is located in Southeast Asia.

Exercise 9:

Grammar Practice – Read the following selection.

1) Abraham Lincoln was born in a log cabin in Kentucky on February 12th, 1809. 2) His family later moved to Indiana. 3) He was given little formal education. 4) Abraham Lincoln walked miles to borrow books and read them by firelight to educate himself. 5) He held several jobs in Illinois. 6) His law practice in Illinois became successful. 7) He had a famous series of debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858. 8) He lost to Douglas in the election for senator, but he gained a national reputation. 9) He was elected president in 1860. 10) In the same year, the Civil War began, and he claimed broad executive powers. 11) Some people said that these powers were dictatorial. 12) He lacked a competent military commander for the Northern Army. 13) He suffered several serious defeats. 14) One of these defeats was the first Battle of Bull Run. 15) In the Emancipation Proclamation, he declared that the slaves were free. 16) Military successes helped him gain reelection in 1864. 17) Unlike many members of Congress, he wanted to be lenient and forgiving with the Southern states. 18) John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on April 14th, 1865. 19) Lincoln died the next morning.

Compose the following sentences.

1. Combine sentences 1 and 3 into one sentence by using the relative pronoun **who**.

2. Change sentence 2 to an adjective clause that begins with the relative pronoun **whose** and combine it with sentence 1.

3. Change sentence 18 to an adjective clause that begins with the relative pronoun **whom** and combine it with sentence 19.

4. Change sentence 11 to an adjective clause that begins with the relative pronoun **that** and combine it with sentence 10.

5. Change sentence 10 to an adjective clause that begins with the relative pronoun **when** and combine it with sentence 9.

6. Change sentence 6 to an adjective clause that begins with the relative pronoun **where** and combine it with sentence 5.

7. Change sentence 14 to an adjective clause that begins with an expression of quantity and combine it with sentence 13. [**one of which**]

Exercise 10:

Review Test – Choose the correct letter for each sentence.

1. I will never forget the time _____ I lost the keys to my house.
a. where b. when c. during which d. who
2. Harry got fired from his job, _____ meant that he could collect unemployment insurance for 26 weeks.
a. that b. which c. who d. whose
3. The doctor treated the wounded man at the hotel _____ he had been shot.
a. who b. where c. which d. on which
4. The house _____ Mary grew up is now owned by a minister and his wife.
a. where b. that c. which d. when
5. I have three brothers living in Texas, one of _____ is a meditation teacher in Houston.
a. whom b. who c. that d. them
6. Giovanni has a cousin _____ nose is incredibly long.
a. who b. who's c. whose d. who their
7. The people _____ the singer danced along to the music.
a. watching b. who watching c. who watch d. who watches
8. Vincent Van Gogh was the type of painter _____ use of colors was extraordinary.
a. who his b. that c. who d. whose
9. I discussed the ethical question with Prof. Mayer _____ teaches philosophy and religion.
a. , who b. who c. that d. who he
10. Hyenas _____ are rather small animals, are able to get food through cunning.
a. that b. , which c. which d. who
11. France _____ people eat a great deal of cheese and drink lots of red wine, has a low incidence of heart attacks.
a. where b. , where c. which d. that
12. I would never sit next to a person _____ like raw garlic.
a. who he smelled b. whose smell c. who smelled d. that smell
13. Jose played soccer for a team _____ lost every game it played.
a. who b. that c. which is d. that it
14. The movie _____ last Saturday was incredibly dull.
a. I went to it b. I went to c. that I went d. which I went
15. The performer _____ at the concert yesterday danced better than Jennifer Lopez.
a. I saw her b. that I saw her c. who I saw d. I see