

Who, which, that

Introduction



These are my boots **which** are good for hiking.

Definition

Who, which and **that** are **relative pronouns**.

Construction and use

We use them to introduce **relative clauses**.

Who is used to talk about people:

These are the people **who** attended the conference.

Which is used to talk about things:

They went to the conference **which** was in Paris.

That is used to talk about things or people:

These are the people **that** attended the conference.

They went to the conference **that** was in Paris.

Defining relative clauses

In these sentences, we need the relative clause to define the people and the conference:

These are the people **who** attended the conference.

They went to the conference **that** was in Paris.

If we only say, "These are the people" or "They went to the conference", there is some information missing - we might not know which people or which conference.

In these kinds of sentences, we do not use commas and we can use **that** instead of **who** and **which**. **That** is more common in conversation. Here are some examples:

The client **who/that** comes from London is visiting us next week.
The files **which/that** are on the table are mine.
These are the boots **which/that** are good for hiking.

'That' or 'who'/'which' in defining relative clauses?

1. **Who** or **that**? Most of the time, there is no difference but:

Who is more common than that in this kind of defining sentence.	A surgeon is someone who performs operations. An architect is a person who designs buildings.
Who is more common than that in this kind of sentence - 'the man' is the <u>subject</u> of the verb 'went'.	This is the man who went to the seminar in Paris.
In superlative and similar sentences, that is more common.	He's the most efficient manager that works here. The first people that joined the team were the technicians.

2. **Which** or **that**?

Most of the time, there is no difference but:

In most sentences, that is more common.	The computer that was broken is OK now. This is the book that is a bestseller in Europe.
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<p>After quantifiers such as all, any, anything, every, everything, no, nothing, some, something, much, many and most, that is more common.</p>	<p>They did everything that was necessary. Some of the information that's in this file is confidential.</p>
<p>In superlative and similar sentences, that is more common.</p>	<p>This is the biggest and best meeting room that is available.</p>

Examples



Oh no, this isn't the colour **which/that** was on the website.



I have four children. My son **who/that** lives in Paris is a lawyer.



A guitarist is someone **who/that** plays the guitar.



Do you remember the church **which/that** was on the corner?



Let's go to this town **which/that's** on the coast.



The first thing **that** needs our attention is the problem with the old computers.



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