

# 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:

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

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

Most of the time, there is no difference but:

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

## 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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