

# HANDBAG THIEF CAUGHT AT LAST!

■ A thief who has stolen over 100 handbags has finally been arrested. Roger Slack was identified last night as the 'handbag thief' by an elderly lady. The witness, who police have not named, was also a victim of Slack, but she had seen his face before he ran away with her handbag. At midnight, the police entered Slack's flat, which was full of handbags. Strangely, all the handbags in the flat, which also included the main witness's bag, still contained all their owners' original money and possessions.

## Presentation

### Defining and non-defining relative clauses

Defining and non-defining relative clauses both give extra information about the noun in the main clause.

Defining: *A thief who has stolen over 100 handbags has finally been arrested.*

Non-defining: *The witness, who police have not named, was also a victim of Slack.*

The extra information in a non-defining clause is not essential. The meaning of the main clause is still clear without the non-defining relative clause.

*The police entered Slack's flat. + The flat was full of handbags. = The police entered Slack's flat, which was full of handbags.*

Non-defining clauses are also different from defining relative clauses because ...

- you cannot replace *who* or *which* with *that*:

*The witness, ~~that~~ police have not named, had her handbag stolen.*

*The handbags, ~~that~~ also included the woman's, contained all the original money.*

- you cannot omit the relative pronoun:

Say *The witness, who police have not named, also had her handbag stolen.* (don't say *The witness, police have not named, also had her handbag stolen.*)

In written English, the non-defining relative clause is separated from the main clause by commas (there are no commas in a defining relative clause):

*The witness, who police have not named, had her handbag stolen. ✓*

*The witness who police have not named had her handbag stolen. ✗*

**TIP** In spoken English, the speaker usually pauses slightly before and after the non-defining clause:  
*Mr Slack, [pause] who is still in police custody, [pause] lives at 28 Haversham Gardens.*

|  | defining | non-defining |
|--|----------|--------------|
| adds extra information                                     | ✗        | ✓            |
| gives essential information                                | ✓        | ✗            |
| can use <i>that</i> instead of <i>who</i> and <i>which</i> | ✓        | ✗            |
| can omit the subject relative pronoun                      | ✗        | ✗            |
| can omit the object relative pronoun                       | ✓        | ✗            |
| uses commas  | ✗        | ✓            |

## Exercises

- 1 Underline six more relative clauses in this article. Then decide if they are defining or non-defining. Write *D* or *N-D*.

# Robbery attempt put on ice!

A THIEF who broke into an office block was seen by the security guard, but he escaped before the police arrived. However, the 38-year-old man, who had taken two laptop computers, was also recorded on security cameras and the police were able to identify him as Adam Mader. When

police entered his flat, which was only five minutes from the office block, they found no sign of him. But just as the police officers were leaving, they heard a sneeze that came from the inside of the fridge. When they opened the door of the fridge, which was only a metre high,

they found Mader curled up inside and shivering. Mader, who had been in the fridge for over two hours, had a cold and was given a blanket and a packet of tissues before the police took him away. The two laptops which had been stolen were returned to the office after they had been defrosted!



1 D 2 3 4 5 6 7

- 2 Combine the three pieces of information into one sentence using a non-defining relative clause.

- 1 Burj Khalifa / was completed in 2010 / the tallest building in the world.  
Burj Khalifa, which was completed in 2010, is the tallest building in the world.
- 2 Coca-Cola® / also called Coke® / sold in over 200 countries.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Barack Obama / born in Hawaii / the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the USA.  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 The moon / has water under its surface / might be a future home for humans.  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 3a Replace *who* or *which* with *that* where possible.

- 1 Are you the person <sup>that</sup> ~~who~~ told the teacher about me?
- 2 My aunt, who has now retired, was a teacher for over 30 years.
- 3 The internet, which we take for granted nowadays, never even existed when I was a child.
- 4 She's someone who I've known for years.

### 3b Delete *who*, *which* or *that* where possible.

- 1 These shoes ~~which~~ I bought are too small.
- 2 These shoes, which are too small, need to be returned.
- 3 Joe's Café, which has only been open since June, is closing.
- 4 The bank robbers who the police caught will only go to prison for a month.
- 5 The owner of this restaurant, who is a friend of mine, lives in Bermuda.
- 6 That group that you like so much are playing live at a local club.