



Commas and Relative Clauses

To use relative clauses.



1. Decide whether the following relative clauses are essential or non-essential. Write your answer next to each sentence.

Remember: if the relative clause is essential, no commas are needed.

If the relative clause is providing the reader with some additional information, commas are used.

- a. My brother, who lives in Sydney, came to see me last month. _____
- b. It is best not to stroke a dog that you do not know. _____
- c. I like to ride bicycles that have a loud bell to ring. _____
- d. Cats, who are lazy, often sleep for most of the day. _____
- e. Students who concentrate in class often do better in tests. _____
- f. Emma, who had fallen asleep on the sofa, suddenly woke up. _____
- g. Victorian children played with dolls that had china heads. _____
- h. Dinosaurs, which are now extinct, are said to have ruled the Earth. _____

2. Write a sentence with an essential relative clause.

3. Write a sentence with a non-essential relative clause.



Commas and Relative Clauses Answers

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- a. My brother, who lives in Sydney, came to see me last month. *non-essential*
 - b. It is best not to stroke a dog that you do not know. *essential*
 - c. I like to ride bicycles that have a loud bell to ring. *essential*
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 - e. Students who concentrate in class often do better in tests. *essential*
 - f. Emma, who had fallen asleep on the sofa, suddenly woke up. *non-essential*
 - g. Victorian children played with dolls that had china heads. *essential*
 - h. Dinosaurs, which are now extinct, are said to have ruled the Earth. *non-essential*
2. Write a sentence with an essential relative clause.
Example answer: The child who had the winning ticket would be the one to receive the prize.
3. Write a sentence with a non-essential relative clause.
Example answer: The cat, who had been sitting on the wall all afternoon, jumped down to greet his owner.



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1. Underline the relative clauses in the following sentences and decide whether they require commas or not. If commas are needed, add them in.

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- a. My brother who lives in Sydney came to see me last month.
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Study the simple sentences and write two new ones about the subject of the sentence: one with an essential relative clause and one with a non-essential relative clause. You may have to make up some extra information.

Remember: if the relative clause is essential, no commas are needed.

If the relative clause is providing the reader with some additional information, commas are used.

a. I have three brothers.

Essential: _____

Non-essential: _____

b. I have one sister.

Essential: _____

Non-essential: _____



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c. I love shoes and have lots of pairs.

Essential: _____

Non-essential: _____

d. My friend Jai moved to Canada.

Essential: _____

Non-essential: _____

e. Mr Robinson is very famous.

Essential: _____

Non-essential: _____



Commas and Relative Clauses **Answers**

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Example answers:

a. I have three brothers.

Essential: *I have three brothers that are younger than me.*

Non-essential: *My brothers, who are all younger than me, like to play on the computer.*

b. I have one sister.

Essential: *I have one sister who annoys me but the other one is nice.*

Non-essential: *My sister, who is older than me, annoys me.*

c. I love shoes and have lots of pairs.

Essential: *I love shoes that light up when you walk and I have lots of pairs of them.*

Non-essential: *I love shoes, which are the main thing I spend my money on, and I have lots of pairs.*

d. My friend Jai moved to Canada.

Essential: *I have a friend called Jai who moved to Canada last week.*

Non-essential: *My friend Jai, who sat next to me in class, moved to Canada.*

e. Mr Robinson is very famous.

Essential: *Mr Robinson is a very famous man who invents many things.*

Non-essential: *Mr Robinson, who has invented many things, is very famous.*