

Essential and Nonessential Clauses

17d. An *adjective clause* is a subordinate clause that modifies a noun or a pronoun.

Depending on how it is used, an adjective clause is either essential or nonessential. An *essential* (or *restrictive*) *clause* provides information that is necessary to the meaning of a sentence. A *nonessential* (or *nonrestrictive*) *clause* provides additional information that can be omitted without changing the basic meaning of a sentence.

ESSENTIAL We wanted to buy new candles **that were white**.

NONESSENTIAL We bought five candles, **which were white**, for the new candlesticks.

EXERCISE A In each of the following sentences, underline the adjective clause once if it is essential and twice if it is nonessential.

Example 1. I liked the cat that had the white paws.

- Meghan loved the turquoise and silver Navajo bracelet that we brought her.
- Are more business leaders who can support nonprofit organizations doing so?
- The first woman ever to lead the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts was Beverly Sills, who is a well-known soprano.
- We spoke to the mechanic, whose work on our car was excellent, about another repair job.
- For a bedtime story, Hon Lu likes to hear the one that is about chickens.
- Our friends to whom we sent a fruit basket last year have sent us a basket of oranges.
- Dad likes to read Dave Barry's humor column, which appears in our paper every week.
- Can you remember the name of the beach that we enjoyed so much last summer?
- Hadji, who is my best friend, bowled his best today.
- Charlie called the real-estate agent whose sales record seemed the best.

EXERCISE B In each of the following sentences, underline the adjective clause once if it is essential and twice if it is nonessential. Then, draw an arrow from the clause to the word it modifies.

Example 1. The fence that separates the two yards is being repaired.

- How do you locate someone who no longer lives in your town?
- The horse, which had been grazing not far away, came trotting over to greet Tanya.
- A dinner was planned to honor Mrs. Gibson, who was retiring at the end of the year.
- The bake sale that has been scheduled for this weekend should be quite successful.
- Can anyone tell me the species of cactus that grows tallest in the United States?