RELATIVE CLAUSES

CEFR Level C2 — Mastery

English Language Worksheets | 4 Worksheets + Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Relative Clauses as a Rhetorical Instrument

At C2, subordination controls emphasis, irony and the burial of information.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Rhetorical uses of relative subordination

Device	Effect	Example
subordination as demotion	Bury a damaging fact in a relative clause	“The minister, who has twice been censured, denies wrongdoing.”
sentence-relative as verdict	Withhold judgement to the final clause	“He blamed the weather, which fooled nobody.”
cumulative relatives	Stacked clauses build a portrait or an indictment	“a man who promised much, who delivered little, and whose defenders have fallen silent”
ironic non-defining	Commas frame a mock-neutral aside	“The scheme, which cost only forty million, has been quietly shelved.”
nominal relative for emphasis	‘What … is …’ fronts and dramatises	“What he never explains is where the money went.”
periodic relative	Delay the main clause behind subordination	“The report which they suppressed, and which we have now obtained, is damning.”

PART A — **Identify the device**

Name the device in each sentence and explain its rhetorical effect in context.

1. “The chairman, whose own firm won the contract, saw no conflict of interest.”
Context: an investigative report

Device: _____ Effect: _____

2. “What the brochure omits is that the beach lies four miles away.”
Context: a travel review

Device: _____ Effect: _____

3. “They cited an internal review, which they wrote, which they approved, and which they will not publish.”
Context: a newspaper leader

Device: _____ Effect: _____

4. “The policy, which enjoys the support of almost nobody, remains in force.”
Context: a political column

Device: _____ Effect: _____

PART B — **Transform for effect**

Rewrite each sentence using the device indicated. The effect must be deliberate.

1 Original: “The CEO resigned. He had been under investigation for two years.”
Device: subordination as demotion (bury the investigation)
→ _____

2 Original: “He claimed the delay was unavoidable. Nobody believed him.”
Device: sentence-relative as verdict
→ _____

3 Original: “The council never says how the funds were spent.”
Device: nominal relative for emphasis
→ _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 2: Precision — Fine Distinctions

Mastery means controlling scope, attachment and ambiguity exactly.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Study the distinctions**

Contrast	Distinction
defining vs non-defining	commas change meaning, not just punctuation: ‘my brother who lives in Oslo’ implies several brothers
which vs of which	‘of which’ attaches to a part or attribute of the antecedent
whereby vs whereupon	‘whereby’ = by which (means); ‘whereupon’ = after which (time)
what vs which	‘what’ has no antecedent; ‘which’ must refer back to something
that vs zero	omission is possible only for the object of a defining clause

Precision cloze: complete each sentence with the ONE option whose logic and register fit exactly.

1. He signed the treaty, _____ the delegates applauded.
2. It is a mechanism _____ disputes are settled without litigation.
3. _____ the inquiry established was that no records had been kept.
4. The manuscript, the final pages _____ are missing, sold for a fortune.
5. She wrote three novels, _____ was ever translated.
6. The clause _____ they relied has since been repealed.
7. My colleague _____ speaks Mandarin will chair the session.
8. The building, _____ foundations were unsound, has been demolished.

PART B — **Resolve the ambiguity**

Each sentence is ambiguous or misleading. Explain the ambiguity, then rewrite it to fix the attachment of the relative clause.

1. “The daughter of the diplomat who was arrested has issued a statement.”
   Ambiguity: _____
   Rewrite: _____
2. “She gave the report to the assistant which she had just finished.”
   Ambiguity: _____
   Rewrite: _____
3. “My sister, who lives in Berlin, is a lawyer — my other sister is a nurse.”
   Ambiguity: _____
   Rewrite: _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 3: Style Analysis & Rewriting

How relative clauses carry argument, cadence and concealed judgement.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Analytical reading**

> *The gallery, whose director insists that the collection was acquired lawfully, has declined to publish the provenance records — which is, of course, entirely its right. Among the objects the origins of which remain unexplained is a bronze that appeared on the market in 1974, a year in which several museums in the region reported thefts. The trustees, none of whom has visited the storerooms, have expressed full confidence in the curator, who reports to the director, who answers to the trustees. What nobody has yet explained is how an institution that documents every ticket sale keeps no record of where its treasures came from.*

1. Identify FIVE relative structures and classify each.

_____

_____

_____

2. Analyse the effect of the sentence-relative ‘which is, of course, entirely its right’.

_____

_____

3. ‘the curator, who reports to the director, who answers to the trustees’ — what is the rhetorical point of this chain?

_____

_____

4. In one sentence: what accusation does the writer make without stating it directly?

_____

_____

PART B — **Neutralise the style**

Rewrite the passage's content as three neutral sentences of factual reporting, stripping the ironic subordination. Then note in one sentence what is lost.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is lost: _____

Score: _____ / 16

Worksheet 4: Extended Writing — The Architecture of Subordination

Deploy the full relative repertoire with deliberate, controlled effect.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A **The task**

Write a persuasive, investigative or satirical passage (200–250 words) on a subject of your choosing. Requirements: at least SIX distinct relative structures, of which at least ONE cumulative chain and ONE sentence-relative used as a verdict; a consistent register. Underline each target structure.

Self-check before submitting	✓
Six or more distinct relative structures, each underlined	
At least one cumulative chain of relative clauses	
At least one sentence-relative delivering a verdict	
Defining vs non-defining punctuation exactly right	
No ‘that’ in a non-defining clause; ‘of whom’ for people	
Register consistent from first line to last	

Word count: _____ Structures underlined: _____ / 6

Score: _____ / 35

ANSWER KEY & TEACHER NOTES

For teacher use only — C2 Level Worksheets

Relative Clauses | English Language Worksheets

Worksheet 1 – Rhetorical Devices

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A1	'whose own firm won the contract'	**Subordination as demotion — the damning fact is tucked into a relative clause while the main clause reports his denial, letting the reader convict him**
A2	'What the brochure omits …'	**Nominal relative for emphasis — fronts the omission, building suspense before the deflating detail**
A3	'which they wrote, which they approved …'	**Cumulative relatives — the repetition exposes the review as self-serving; the final clause lands the blow**
A4	'which enjoys the support of almost nobody'	**Ironic non-defining — the commas feign neutral aside while delivering the criticism**
B1	demotion	**e.g. 'The CEO, who had been under investigation for two years, resigned.'**
B2	sentence-relative verdict	**e.g. 'He claimed the delay was unavoidable, which nobody believed.'**
B3	nominal relative	**e.g. 'What the council never says is how the funds were spent.'**

Worksheet 2 – Precision Cloze & Ambiguity

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A	Gaps 1–8 in order	**1 whereupon, 2 whereby, 3 What, 4 of which, 5 none of which, 6 on which, 7 who, 8 whose**
B1	attachment ambiguity	**'who was arrested' could attach to the daughter or the diplomat. Rewrite: 'The diplomat's daughter, who was arrested, has issued …' or 'The daughter of the diplomat who was arrested …' → 'The daughter of the arrested diplomat …'**
B2	wrong pronoun + attachment	**'which' cannot refer to the assistant (a person) and seems to modify the wrong noun. Rewrite: 'She gave the assistant the report which she had just finished.'**
B3	non-defining implies one sister	**Commas make it non-defining, implying only one sister — contradicted by 'my other sister'. Rewrite: 'My sister who lives in Berlin is a lawyer; my other sister is a nurse.' (defining, no commas)**

Worksheet 3 – Style Analysis

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q1	Five structures + types	**'whose director insists …' (non-defining, whose); 'which is, of course, entirely its right' (sentence-relative); 'the origins of which remain unexplained' (noun + of which); 'a year in which several museums … reported thefts' (prep + which); 'none of whom has visited the storerooms' (quantifier + of whom); 'who reports to the director, who answers to the trustees' (cumulative chain); 'What nobody has yet explained …' (nominal relative)**

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q2	‘which is, of course, entirely its right’	**A mock-concession: the sentence-relative grants the gallery its legal right while the phrasing (‘of course’) implies the refusal is nonetheless damning — irony delivered as fairness**
Q3	the chain of relatives	**It traces a closed loop of accountability — curator → director → trustees → (curator) — so that the syntax itself demonstrates that nobody is answerable to anyone outside**
Q4	implied accusation	**The gallery is concealing looted or stolen acquisitions behind a governance structure designed to prevent scrutiny — asserted nowhere, unmistakable throughout**
B	Neutral rewrite	**e.g. ‘The gallery has not published its provenance records. Its director says the collection was acquired lawfully. One bronze appeared on the market in 1974.’ Lost: irony, cadence and the concealed accusation — the facts survive; the indictment disappears**

Worksheet 4 – Extended Writing Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Structural range	Six or more distinct relative structures, deliberately deployed and underlined	0–8
Advanced structures	Cumulative chain + sentence-relative verdict, both effective	0–8
Register & control	Register sustained; subordination governs emphasis precisely	0–7
Accuracy	Punctuation, pronoun choice and attachment all error-free	0–6
Effect	The passage genuinely persuades or amuses; subordination earns its place	0–6