

THAT VS. WHICH

WHAT ARE THEY AND WHEN TO USE THEM?



THAT AND WHICH

Are relative pronouns used to connect a relative clause to a noun or pronoun. A relative clause contains a subject and a predicate and is used to **specify** which person or thing we are talking about, or to give **additional information**.

THAT

Introduces **essential clauses**. These clauses give necessary information that is used to specify what it is we are talking about.

For example:

I love the shirt **that you are wearing**.



WHICH

Introduces **non essential clauses**, which are clauses that do not alter the meaning of the sentence if they are removed from the sentence.

For example:

The book, **which you can find in any bookstore**, has all the information you need.

REFERENTS

A referent is the person, animal or thing that a word stands for.

THAT can refer to people, animals and things.

WHICH refers to things and animals.

It can also refer to a whole sentence or clause.

For example:

She seems really happy, **which is all that matters**.
(underlined clause is the referent)

COMMAS

DO NOT use commas with essential clauses.

For example:

She is the girl **that I told you about**.

USE COMMAS with non essential clauses: a pair of commas if the clause is in the middle of the sentence, and use only one comma if the clause is at the end of the sentence.

For example:

The car, **which was very expensive**, was destroyed in the accident.

For example:

She told them she was busy, **which was a lie**.

