Defining vs non-defining clauses

10 practice questions • Padworth Learning Studio

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Which sentence identifies a subset of students?

The students who passed celebrated. / The students, who passed, celebrated. / Both have exactly the same meaning.

My answer: _____

2. Which adds extra information about an identified tutor?

My tutor, who lives nearby, cycles. / The tutor who lives nearby cycles. / A tutor lives nearby.

My answer: _____

3. Which is acceptable?

My car, that is old, works. / My car, which is old, works. / My car, is old, works.

My answer: _____

4. The email ___ you sent arrived. Choose the possible omission.

Omit the entire clause / Omit the object pronoun / Omit you

My answer: _____

5. What should decide whether we use commas?

The length of the sentence / Whether the clause identifies or adds information / Whether the noun is plural

My answer: _____

6. “My brothers who live abroad are visiting” refers to which brothers?

Only brothers who are not visiting. / Only the brothers living abroad. / Necessarily all the speaker’s brothers.

My answer: _____

7. “My brothers, who live abroad, are visiting” presents living abroad as what?

Extra information about the brothers. / A restriction selecting some brothers. / A question about where they live.

My answer: _____

8. Which sentence permits that?

My phone, which I bought yesterday, is broken. / London, which I visited, was busy. / The phone which I bought is broken.

My answer: _____

9. Which sentence permits omission of the relative pronoun?

The bag that fell was red. / The bag that I lost was red. / My bag, which I lost, was red.

My answer: _____

10. You mean only the damaged boxes. Choose the sentence.

The boxes that were damaged were replaced. / The boxes, which were damaged, were replaced. / The boxes who were damaged were replaced.

My answer: _____

Answer key & explanations

1. **The students who passed celebrated.** — Without commas, the clause identifies which students celebrated.

2. **My tutor, who lives nearby, cycles.** — The commas mark supplementary information.

3. **My car, which is old, works.** — A non-defining clause about a thing uses which.

4. **Omit the object pronoun** — The email you sent arrived is grammatical: the object relative pronoun is omitted.

5. **Whether the clause identifies or adds information** — The meaning and identifying role determine the punctuation.

6. **Only the brothers living abroad.** — The defining clause restricts the group to brothers living abroad.

7. **Extra information about the brothers.** — The commas mark a non-defining clause, giving extra information about the identified group.

8. **The phone which I bought is broken.** — Which can become that in the defining clause without commas, but not in the two non-defining clauses.

9. **The bag that I lost was red.** — That is an object in the first sentence. Non-defining pronouns and full-clause subject pronouns stay.

10. **The boxes that were damaged were replaced.** — The defining clause selects damaged boxes rather than presenting all boxes as damaged.