RELATIVE CLAUSES

CEFR Level C1 — Advanced

English Language Worksheets | 4 Worksheets + Answer Key

Worksheet 1: Advanced Relative Structures

At C1, the basic pronouns are assumed. Focus: nuance, reduction, formality.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Key structures at C1

Structure	Function & Notes	Example
preposition + which/whom	Formal; the preposition precedes the pronoun	“the principle on which the argument rests”
quantifier + of whom/which	all / none / many / several + of whom	“fifty witnesses, none of whom could agree”
noun + of which	A part or attribute of the antecedent	“a theory the implications of which are vast”
sentence-relative which	Refers to the whole preceding clause	“She resigned, which nobody had foreseen.”
reduced relative clauses	-ing / -ed / to-infinitive; no pronoun	“the measures introduced last year”
‘whereby’ / ‘wherein’	Formal: by which / in which	“a system whereby votes are weighted”
nominal relatives	‘what’, ‘whatever’ = the thing(s) which	“What troubles me is the silence.”

PART A — **Complete the sentences**

Fill in each gap with an appropriate word or phrase. More than one answer may be possible.

1. The committee heard twelve experts, _____ of whom endorsed the plan.
2. This is the doctrine _____ which the entire case depends.
3. They devised a scheme _____ surplus energy is sold back to the grid.
4. The minister denied everything, _____ was hardly a surprise.
5. It is a treaty the terms _____ which remain confidential.
6. _____ concerns me most is the absence of oversight.
7. The proposals _____ last month have already been withdrawn.
8. She is an author to _____ we owe a great debt.

PART B — **Error analysis**

Identify and correct the error in each sentence. Then note the rule violated.

1 “The theory, that has been widely criticised, remains influential.”
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

2 “He made several claims, none of them were verified.”
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

3 “The scholar who's work I cited has since retracted it.”
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

4 “She explained the reason for which she resigned.” (unidiomatic)
Correction: _____
Rule: _____

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Register, Reduction & Cohesion

The same relationship, marked formally, neutrally, or economically.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — The register spectrum

Relative structures vary sharply by register. Study the tables.

Informal	Neutral	Formal / academic
the man I spoke to	the man who I spoke to	the man to whom I spoke
the way it works	the way in which it works	the manner in which it operates
a rule that lets you …	a rule which allows …	a rule whereby one may …
some of them agreed	and some of them agreed	some of whom agreed

Choice	Nuance
that vs which (defining)	‘that’ is more neutral; US usage reserves ‘which’ for non-defining
whom vs who (object)	‘whom’ is formal; obligatory directly after a preposition
omission of the pronoun	possible only when it is the object of a defining clause
reduced clause	compresses and de-emphasises; loses tense marking

PART B — Register transformation

Rewrite each sentence in the register indicated, changing only what is needed.

1 The colleague I shared an office with has been promoted. *(formal: prep + whom)*
→ _____

2 There's a clause which says tenants can sublet. *(formal: ‘whereby’)*
→ _____

3 We interviewed thirty applicants and hired four of them. *(‘of whom’)*
→ _____

4 The report which was published on Monday has been withdrawn. *(reduce the clause)*
→ _____

PART C — Verdicts

Decide whether each use is (a) standard, (b) acceptable but marked/stylistic, or (c) a genuine error. Justify in one sentence.

1 “The evidence upon which she relied was flawed.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

2 “My brother, that lives in Oslo, is visiting.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

3 “The delegates, several of which abstained, left early.”
Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

4	“What matters is not the cost but the principle.” Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____
5	“The person who I gave it to has vanished.” Verdict: (a)/(b)/(c) Justification: _____

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Academic Writing & Critical Analysis

How relative clauses build density, precision and hierarchy of information.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Analytical reading**

> *Academic prose is often criticised for a density which its defenders regard as precision. Consider the relative clause, a device whereby a writer subordinates one proposition to another without severing the link between them. A sentence containing three such clauses, each of which qualifies the noun preceding it, may tax the reader; yet the alternative — a sequence of short declaratives, none of which signals its relation to the others — sacrifices exactly the hierarchy that argument requires. What distinguishes good academic writing from bad is not the number of subordinate clauses, which is a matter of style, but whether each one earns the weight it adds.*

1. Identify FIVE relative structures and classify each (defining, non-defining, sentence-relative, ‘of which’, ‘whereby’, nominal, reduced).

_____

_____

_____

2. Explain the function of ‘none of which signals its relation to the others’.

_____

_____

3. ‘What distinguishes good academic writing from bad …’ — what kind of relative is ‘what’ here, and what does it achieve?

_____

_____

4. Rewrite ‘a device whereby a writer subordinates …’ in a neutral register.

_____

_____

PART B — **Sentence transformation**

Rewrite each sentence according to the instruction. Preserve the meaning.

1. Original: “The study had many limitations. The authors acknowledged few of them.”
   Task: combine with ‘of which’.
   → _____
2. Original: “The policy was reversed. Nobody had expected this.”
   Task: use a sentence-relative clause.
   → _____
3. Original: “This is the framework. The whole model rests on it.”
   Task: formal, preposition + which.
   → _____
4. Original: “The data which were collected in 2019 are now obsolete.”
   Task: reduce the relative clause.
   → _____

5 Original: “The thing that surprises me is his confidence.”
Task: rewrite as a nominal relative with ‘What’.
→ _____

PART C — Guided essay paragraph

Write a paragraph of 120–150 words arguing ONE position below. Include at least FOUR distinct relative structures from Worksheets 1–2; keep the register formal-academic.

Position A: Complex subordination makes academic prose more precise, not less readable.
Position B: Academic writers should favour short sentences over dense relative clauses.

My position: ___ A ___ B

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Word count: _____

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Synthesis, Data Interpretation & Argumentation

Use relative structures to interpret evidence and rebut claims.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Interpreting complex data**

Study the table comparing five university libraries.

Library	Volumes (m)	Digital (%)	Seats	Open hrs/wk	Satisfaction (/10)
Ashfield	3.1	42	1,200	98	7.8
Brightwood	1.4	78	450	168	8.5
Corvin	6.8	31	2,100	72	7.2
Dunmore	0.9	91	300	168	8.1
Elmsworth	2.6	55	900	112	8.0

Write six analytical sentences using the data. Apply the constraints below.

1. [Use a non-defining clause with commas.]

_____

_____

2. [Use a quantifier + 'of which' phrase.]

_____

_____

3. [Use a preposition + which/whom in formal position.]

_____

_____

4. [Use a sentence-relative 'which' commenting on a whole claim.]

_____

_____

5. [Use a reduced relative clause.]

_____

_____

6. [Acknowledge a limitation using a nominal relative ('What the data cannot show …').]

_____

_____

PART B — **Adversarial comparison (debate format)**

Write a two-sentence counter-argument that concedes part of each claim but challenges it from another angle. Use formal register and at least one relative structure per response.

1. Claim: "Corvin, which holds by far the largest collection, is plainly the best-resourced library."
Hint: consider digital access and opening hours.

Counter-argument:

_____

2. Claim: “Dunmore, whose collection is the smallest, cannot serve serious researchers.”
Hint: consider its digital percentage and satisfaction.

Counter-argument:

3. Claim: “Satisfaction tracks seating: the more seats a library has, the happier its users.”
Hint: check whether the correlation holds across all five.

Counter-argument:

PART C — Extended writing task

Write a discursive essay introduction (180–220 words) on the proposition below. Use at least FIVE distinct relative structures from this unit (underline them). Maintain a formal-academic register; present the proposition, acknowledge its complexity, and signal your line of argument.

“A library's value lies in the access it provides, not in the volumes it holds.”

Word count: _____ Structures underlined: _____ / 5

Score: _____ / 35

ANSWER KEY & TEACHER NOTES

For teacher use only — C1 Level Worksheets

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Worksheet 1 – Gap Fill

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	twelve experts, ___ of whom	**none / several / most (any logical quantifier)**
2	the doctrine ___ which the case depends	**on / upon**
3	a scheme ___ surplus energy is sold	**whereby (= by which)**
4	denied everything, ___ was hardly a surprise	**which (sentence-relative)**
5	the terms ___ which remain confidential	**of**
6	___ concerns me most	**What (nominal relative)**
7	The proposals ___ last month	**introduced / tabled (reduced relative, -ed)**
8	an author to ___ we owe a debt	**whom (obligatory after a preposition)**

Worksheet 1 – Error Analysis

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	‘that’ in a non-defining clause	**The theory, which has been widely criticised, remains influential. (‘that’ is impossible in non-defining clauses)**
2	comma splice with ‘none of them’	**He made several claims, none of which were verified. (‘of which’ links the clauses; ‘none of them’ needs ‘and’ or a semicolon)**
3	who's vs whose	**The scholar whose work I cited has since retracted it. (‘who's’ = who is)**
4	the reason for which	**She explained the reason why she resigned / the reason for her resignation. (‘for which’ is unidiomatic after ‘reason’)**

Worksheet 2 – Parts B & C

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
B1	prep + whom	**The colleague with whom I shared an office has been promoted.**
B2	whereby	**There is a clause whereby tenants may sublet.**
B3	of whom	**We interviewed thirty applicants, of whom we hired four.**
B4	reduce	**The report published on Monday has been withdrawn.**
C1	upon which she relied	**(a) Standard formal usage**
C2	that in non-defining	**(c) Error — non-defining clauses take ‘who’, never ‘that’**
C3	several of which (people)	**(c) Error — delegates are people: ‘several of whom’**
C4	What matters is …	**(a) Standard nominal relative**
C5	who I gave it to	**(b) Acceptable informally; formal writing prefers ‘to whom I gave it’**

Worksheet 3 – Part A (Passage Analysis)

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q1	Five structures + types	**‘which its defenders regard as precision’ (defining); ‘whereby a writer subordinates …’ (formal, = by which); ‘each of which qualifies the noun’ (quantifier + of which); ‘none of which signals its relation’ (quantifier + of which); ‘which is a matter of style’ (sentence-relative); ‘What distinguishes good academic writing …’ (nominal); ‘the noun preceding it’ (reduced, -ing)**
Q2	none of which …	**It attributes a shared failing to every member of the preceding set (the short declaratives), linking them grammatically while asserting that none does the cohesive work required.**
Q3	‘What’ as nominal relative	**‘What’ = ‘the thing which’; it fronts the subject as a whole clause, creating suspense and emphasis before the answer is delivered.**
Q4	whereby → neutral	**‘a device by which / through which a writer subordinates one proposition to another’**

Worksheet 3 – Part B (Transformations)

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	of which	**The study had many limitations, few of which the authors acknowledged.**
2	sentence-relative	**The policy was reversed, which nobody had expected.**
3	prep + which	**This is the framework on which the whole model rests.**
4	reduce	**The data collected in 2019 are now obsolete.**
5	nominal relative	**What surprises me is his confidence.**

Worksheets 3–4: Extended & Creative Tasks — Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Structural range	Uses 4–5 distinct relative structures accurately	0–4
Register	Consistently formal-academic; pronoun choices well judged	0–3
Argumentation	Clear line of argument; subordination serves the reasoning	0–3
Accuracy	No errors in pronoun, punctuation, or reduction	0–2
Coherence	Ideas logically sequenced; information hierarchy clear	0–3

Worksheet 4 – Part A (Model sentences)

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
1	non-defining	**Brightwood, which opens around the clock, records the highest satisfaction.**
2	of which	**Five libraries were surveyed, two of which digitise over three-quarters of their holdings.**
3	prep + which	**Digital access is the criterion on which Dunmore most clearly excels.**
4	sentence-relative	**Corvin holds the largest collection yet scores lowest on satisfaction, which suggests that size alone persuades nobody.**

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
5	reduced	**The libraries opening 168 hours a week both outperform their better-stocked rivals.**
6	nominal relative	**What the data cannot show is how far satisfaction reflects opening hours rather than holdings.**