learning target

Aim of this section is to learn the relative pronous and their use in the four cases.

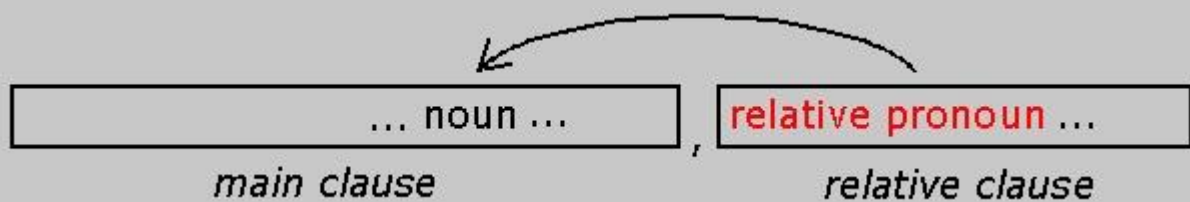| German	English
Das ist die Frau, **die** ich gestern getroffen habe.	That's the woman **who** I met yesterday.
Er ist der Mann, **den** wir suchen.	He is the man **who** we are looking for.
Die Arbeit, **welche** ich jetzt mache, ist schön.	The job, **which** I'm doing now, is nice.

rules

What is a relative pronoun?

A relative pronoun is word which introduces a relative clause.

The relative pronoun refers back to a noun (subject or object) in the main clause.

I want us to call this noun in the main clause: *Bezugswort* (=antecedent).

examples:

Die Frau hat ein großes *Auto*, **das** aus Europa kommt. (The woman has a big car <u>which</u> comes from Europe.)

- *Auto* is the object of the main sentence
- *das* is the relative pronoun of the relative clause
- *das* refers back to the car (car is the "Bezugswort")

Die *Frau*, **die** in New York wohnt, hat ein großes Auto. (The woman, <u>who</u> lives in New York, has a big car.)

- *Frau* is the subject of the main sentence
- *die* is the relative pronoun of the relative clause
- *die* refers back to the woman (woman is the "Bezugswort")

Which relative pronouns do exist in German?

The relative pronouns in German are:

- **der**: refers back to male nouns
- **die**: refers back to female nouns
- **das**: refers back to neuter nouns

- **welcher**: refers back to male, female or neuter nouns

You can use either *der/die/das* or *welcher*.

Both ways are possible although *welcher* is mostly used in written German.

examples:

- Ich kenne den *Mann*, **der** gestern hier war. (I know the man <u>who</u> was here yesterday.)
- Ich kenne den *Mann*, **welcher** gestern hier war. (I know the man <u>who</u> was here yesterday.)

If I say *der/die/das* and *welcher* are the relative pronouns than it's just half of the truth.

Like many other words you have to modify the pronouns depending on <u>numerus</u>, <u>gender</u> and <u>case</u> (see tables at the end) and now it becomes a bit complicate.

- The **gender** and **numerus** of the relative pronoun is the same as the gender and numerus of the "Bezugswort".
- The **case** of the relative pronoun, however, is determined by the "function" of the pronoun in the relative clause - <u>not</u> by the "function" of the "Bezugswort"!

examples:

Ich kenne den *Mann*, **der** in Cagayan wohnt. (I know the man <u>who</u> lives in Cagayan.)

- Mann is the "Bezugswort". It's singular and male → the relative pronoun must be singular and male, too
- He (->der) plays the roll of the subject in the relative clause. He does something (he lives) → nominative

Ich kenne den *Mann*, **den** die Leute hassen. (I know the man <u>who</u> the people hate.)

- Mann is the "Bezugswort". It's singular and male → the relative pronoun must be singular and male, too
- The people is the subject of the relative clause (they hate). He (->den) is the direct object of the relative clause. He is being hated. → accusative

Ich kenne den *Mann*, **dem** die Leute ein Buch schenkten. (I know the man <u>to whom</u> the people gave a book.)

- Mann is the "Bezugswort". It's singular and male → the relative pronoun must be singular and male, too

- The people is the subject of the relative clause (they gave). The book is the direct object.
  He (->dem) is the indirect object of the relative clause. He is the beneficiary. → dative

Ich kenne den *Mann*, **dessen** Hund Angie heißt. (I know the man <u>whose</u> dog is called Angie.)

- Mann is the "Bezugswort". It's singular and male → the relative pronoun must be singular and male, too
- He has a dog which is called Angie. The dog belongs to him (possesion / ownership) → genitive

I think the understanding of the cases in relatives clauses is quite tricky and needs praticse.
Don't worry we will practise this step by step in the exercises.

Last remarks

In German we <u>don't</u> distinguish between relative pronouns
which refer back to alive or dead things like in English.

- **who**: refers back to alive things
- **which / that**: refers back to dead things

In this point German is easier than English.

<u>examples:</u>

- Ich kenne das *Mädchen*, **das** in Cagayan lebt. (I know the girl <u>who</u> lives in Cagayan.)
- Ich kenne das *Haus*, **das** abgebrannt ist. (I know the house <u>which</u> burned down.)

In German it's not possible to leave out the relative pronoun like in English.

<u>examples:</u>

- Das ist der *Computer*, **den** ich gestern gekauft habe. (That's the computer <u>which</u> I bought yesterday.)
- Das ist der *Computer*, ich gestern gekauft habe. (That's the computer I bought yesterday.)

In English both sentences are possible. The second one without the relative pronoun sounds even better.
In German, however, only the first one is correct. The second sentence without "den" is wrong and not understandable.

In German the relative clause is always separated by a comma from the main clause.
I think that's an advantange compared to English because it makes it easier to understand the two sentences.

example:

- Das ist der *Junge*, (comma) **der** bei der Post arbeitet. (That's the boy (no comma) <u>who</u> works at the post office.)

If there is a preposition which belongs to a verb
then the preposition goes at the beginning of the relative clause.

examples:

- Das ist die *Frau*, <u>auf</u> **die** gewartet habe. (That the woman **who** I was waiting <u>for</u>.)
- Sie ist das *Mädchen*, <u>von</u> **dem** ich träume. (She is the girl **who** I dream <u>of</u>.)

In the first sentence the verb is: *warten auf* (wait for).
In the second sentence the verb is: *träumen von* (dream of).

tables

declension" of the relative pronouns: **der/die/das**

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	-
nominative	der	die	das	die
genitive	<u>dessen</u>	<u>deren</u>	<u>dessen</u>	<u>deren</u>
dative	dem	der	dem	<u>denen</u>
accusative	den	die	das	die

The declination scheme of the der/die/das - relative pronouns is almost the same as the as the "declination" of the definite article. I underlined the five pronouns which differ.

"declension" of the relative pronoun: **welcher**

case	singular			plural
	male	female	neuter	-
nominative	welcher	welche	welches	welche
genitive	welches	welcher	welches	welcher
dative	welchem	welcher	welchem	welchen
accusative	welchen	welche	welches	welche