

# THAT versus WHICH

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER SUPPORT

### TERMS TO KNOW

#### RESTRICTIVE CLAUSE (ESSENTIAL)

- information presented in the clause is required to understand the complete sentence
- distinguishes one noun (**antecedent**) from another
- does not use commas

#### NONRESTRICTIVE CLAUSE (NONESSENTIAL)

- information presented in the clause is not required to understand the complete sentence
- uses commas before and after the clause
- is not required to understand who or what the noun refer to
- can be omitted
- does not use the subordinator **that**

### THAT

- Use with restrictive clauses only.
- Does not use commas with restrictive clauses.
- Identifies the importance of the information in the clause to avoid any misunderstanding

#### EXAMPLES

The **hiking trail** that was repaired last week remains closed.

The **music festival** that accessed professional security was expensive.

She travelled on the **airline** that required masks.

The **cafeteria** offered **healthier food choices** that were reasonably priced.

The **weather** that we experienced was unbearable.

### WHICH

- Use with restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses depending on citation guidelines
- **Some writers will use which only for nonrestrictive clauses.**
- With nonrestrictive clauses, a comma is required to indicate nonessential information

#### EXAMPLES

The **magazine**, which I read, is very popular.

The **music festival**, which I attended, was expensive.

The **film**, which I saw, was quite long.

The editor provided **feedback**, which was expected.

The actor admired the **location**, which was quiet.

### CHOOSING THAT OR WHICH

- **that** and **which** have the same goal to introduce information in the form of a clause
- Be aware of the rules for your assigned citation style guide with regards to using **that** and **which**.
- Be consistent with your choices.



## ANALYSIS

1. **The *movie* that discussed climate change won many awards.**

- ***that discussed climate change***
  - restrictive clause
  - establishes identity of the noun (antecedent) it follows
  - identifies the movie (antecedent)
  - restricts or limits the ***movie***
- **The *movie* xxxx won many awards.**
  - If a writer removes or does not acknowledge the clause, the reader could become confused.
  - What ***movie*** won many awards?
  - Readers do not know what ***movie*** won the awards.



2. ***Inconvenient Truth*, which discussed climate change, won many awards.**

- ***,which discussed climate change***, is nonrestrictive (nonessential) clause
  - ***Inconvenient Truth* xxxx won many awards.**
  - Readers do not need the **which clause** to comprehend the sentence.

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