

CHOOSING “THAT” OR “WHICH”

Should you use “that” or “which”? Nearly all writers encounter this puzzling grammar issue at some point in their writing. Thankfully, the answer to this question is simple: it centers around something called the “restrictive clause.”

According to [Writers Digest](#), the problem of “Which” vs. “That” is one of the 12 most commonly asked grammar questions!

1. USE “THAT” TO INTRODUCE A RESTRICTIVE CLAUSE

A **restrictive clause** is a phrase that describes a noun or pronoun with information essential to the meaning of the sentence. If you removed this information, you would change the central meaning of the sentence.

Example: She purchased the scarf **that** matched her outfit.
Hikers need shoes **that** have traction.

Structure: **base sentence + “that” + restrictive clause** (essential information)

2. USE “WHICH” TO INTRODUCE A NON-RESTRICTIVE CLAUSE

A **non-restrictive clause** is a phrase that describes a noun or pronoun with extra information that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. You should use commas to separate the non-restrictive clause from the rest of the sentence, since commas indicate that you could delete the clause without changing the central meaning of the sentence.

Example: She purchased the scarf, **which was on sale**, because it matched her outfit.
Hikers need shoes with traction, **which** are expensive.

Structure: **base sentence + “which” + non-restrictive clause** (extra, non-essential information)

PRACTICE NOW