

Bracken Business Communications Clinic

GRAMMAR

WHO, WHOM, WHOSE: INTERROGATIVE AND RELATIVE PRONOUNS

Who, whom, and whose function as **interrogative pronouns** and **relative pronouns**. Like personal pronouns, interrogative and relative pronouns change form according to how they function in a question or in a clause. (See handout on Personal Pronouns).

Forms/Cases

Who = nominative form; functions as subject
Whom = objective form; functions as object
Whose = possessive form; indicates ownership

As Interrogative Pronouns

They are used to introduce a question.

e.g., Who is on first base? Who = subject, nominative form
 Whom did you call? Whom = object, objective form
 Whose foot is on first base? Whose = possessive, possessive form

As Relative Pronouns

They are used to introduce a dependent clause that refers to a noun or personal pronoun in the main clause.

e.g., You will meet the teacher who will share an office with you.
 Who is the subject of the clause and relates to *teacher*. (...*she* will share an office...)

The student chose the TA who she knew would help her the most.
 Who is the subject of the clause and relates to *TA*. (...*she* knew *he* would help her)

You will see the advisor *whom* you met last week.
 Whom is the object of the clause and relates to *advisor* (...you met *him*...)

You will meet the student *whose* favorite class is Business Communication.
 Whose indicates ownership or possession and relates to *student*.

NOTE: Do not use *who's*, the contraction for *who is*, for the possessive *whose*.

- **How to Troubleshoot**

In your mind, substitute a *she* or *her*, or a *he* or *him*, for the *who* or the *whom*.

e.g., The student chose the TA who [she knew] would help her the most (...*he* would help her the most).

e.g., You will see the advisor whom you met last week. (you met *him* (objective form), not *he* (nominative form)).