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SENTENCE STRUCTURE L9.9 – RELATIVE CLAUSES

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Video Lesson:

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WHAT ARE RELATIVE CLAUSES?

Relative clauses give extra information without beginning a new sentence.

Relative clauses are subordinate clauses and are surrounded by commas. They are introduced by relative pronouns.

Relative clauses usually refer to a noun and come directly after it.

- „Das ist der Mann, **der** einen Ferrari hat.“

RELATIVE CLAUSES WITH “DER, DIE, DAS, WELCHE”

If we give additional information about a person or a thing, we use the relative pronouns der, die, das and welche.

You have to decline them:

- „Das ist **der Mann**, der (welcher) einen Ferrari hat.“

Relative pronouns are declined in the same way as demonstrative pronouns. I show you the different forms of relative pronouns and a step-by-step guide on how to determine the correct case in the lesson: **Relative Pronouns**.

RELATIVE CLAUSES WITH “WO”

If the relative clause describes a place, we often use the relative pronoun "wo".

- „Gehen wir in das neue **Restaurant**? **Dort** gibt es Sushi!“
- „Gehen wir in das neue **Restaurant**, **in dem** es Sushi gibt?“
- „Gehen wir in das neue **Restaurant**, **wo** es Sushi gibt?“

The "wo" replaces the relative pronoun + preposition.



Advice:

In informal language, "wo" is used almost all the time.

RELATIVE CLAUSES WITH "WAS"

Relative clauses can also describe demonstrative pronouns and indefinite pronouns. When it is a neuter superlative, something unspecified (etwas, alles, nichts,...), or an entire clause, we use "was".

Neuter Superlative:

- „Das ist **das Beste**, **was** ich jemals gemacht habe.“

Indefinite Pronouns:

- „Der Mann sagt **nichts**, **was** von Bedeutung ist.“ (Nominative)
 „Ich sehe **etwas**, **was** du nicht siehst.“ (Accusative)
 → Here we could use "das" as well.

Entire Clause:

- „Er spielt in der Wohnung Schlagzeug, **was** die Nachbarn stört.“

In this case, it isn't possible to include a preposition. However, the relative clause related to an entire sentence is usually formed with wo(r)+preposition.

- „Er hat mir geholfen, **wofür** ich ihm sehr dankbar bin.“

In informal speech, we would rather just say:

- „Er hat mir geholfen. **Dafür** bin ich ihm sehr dankbar.“

Both mean: He has helped me. For that, I am very thankful.

SUMMARY

- Relative clauses give more information without having to start a new sentence.
- Relative clauses usually describe a noun and come directly after it.
- They can also describe an entire sentence, though this doesn't occur too often in the spoken German language.
- In addition to relative pronouns, there are also the versions: "wo", "was" and "wo(r)" + Preposition.

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