

# THAT and WHICH

## *with Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Clauses*

(Essential)

(Non-Essential)

### Restrictive/ “Essential” Clauses → use “THAT”

- A Restrictive, or “essential”, clause *restricts* the meaning of the sentence. In other words, **it limits the word it refers to: removing it would leave the meaning unclear or too general.** Use “that” to introduce these clauses.



- EXAMPLE: The raccoon **that** sneaked into the garage was frightened.
- EXPLANATION: “That sneaked into the garage” is your restrictive clause here. You need the clause to tell you which raccoon was frightened.

### Non-Restrictive/ “Non-Essential” Clauses → use “WHICH”

- A Non-restrictive, or “non-essential”, clause does NOT restrict the meaning of the sentence. In other words, **it is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.** Use “which” to introduce these clauses, and surround the clause with commas to indicate that it could be removed.
- EXAMPLE: *Huckleberry Finn*, **which** is my favorite book, was written by Mark Twain.
- EXPLANATION: “Which is my favorite book” is your non-restrictive clause here. You don’t need the clause to tell you which book you’re talking about because you have the title.

\*A Final Test for Random “That’s”: If you’ve written a sentence with “that” in it, go back and read it without the “that.” If the sentence still makes sense, you probably don’t need the “that.”