

## Tips for Using That and Which

“That” and “which” are relative pronouns that are similar in meaning. However, they have some grammatical differences.

### That

Usually, “that” is used in a restrictive clause. A restrictive clause defines another phrase in the sentence and if you eliminate the restrictive clause, the meaning of the sentence may be confusing.

Example:

Trees that have thorns scare me.

The words “that have thorns” define (restrict) the type of trees that scare me. If I remove them, the sentence is still grammatically correct and makes sense, but it does not make it clear that only trees that have thorns scare me. Not all trees scare me.

### Which

Usually, “which” is used in a nonrestrictive clause. A nonrestrictive clause modifies a phrase but is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

Example:

Palo Verde trees, which have thorns, scare me.

The words “which have thorns” add meaning and help the reader understand more about the Palo Verde trees, but if we take those words out, it is still clear that it is a specific type of tree that scare me.