**Who or Whom**

*Whom* should be used to refer to the object of a verb or preposition. When in doubt, try this simple trick: If you can replace the word with “he”’ or “’she,” use *who*. If you can replace it with “him” or “her,” use *whom*.

* **Who** should be used to refer to the subject of a sentence.
* **Whom** should be used to refer to the object of a verb or preposition.

*Who* or *whom*? If you’re like most English speakers, you know that there’s a difference between these [pronouns](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/pronouns/), but you aren’t sure what that difference is. After reading this article, you might conclude that knowing when to use *who* or *whom* is not as difficult as you think.

**When to Use Who**

In a sentence, *who* is used as a subject. Let’s look at a couple of examples:

*Who would like to go on vacation?*

*Who made these awesome quesadillas?*

**When to Use Whom**

*Whom* is used as the [object of a verb](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/grammar-basics-what-are-transitive-and-intransitive-verbs/) or [preposition](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/prepositions/). Consider these examples:

*To whom was the letter addressed?*

*Whom do you believe?*

*I do not know with whom I will go to the prom.*

**The Difference Between Who and Whom**

How can you tell when your pronoun is the object of a verb or preposition? Try substituting “he” or “she” and “him” or “her.” If “he” or “she” fits, you should use *who*. If “him” or “her” fits, you should use *whom*. Keep in mind that you may have to temporarily rearrange the sentence a bit while you test it.

*Who/whom ate my sandwich?*

Try substituting “she” and “her”: *She ate my sandwich. Her ate my sandwich.* “She” works and “her” doesn’t. That means the word you want is *who*.

*Whom ate my sandwich?*

*Who ate my sandwich?*

Let’s look at another:

*Who/whom should I talk to about labeling food in the refrigerator?*

Try substituting “he” and “him”: *I should talk to he. I should talk to him.* “Him” works, so the word you need is *whom*.

*Whom should I talk to about labeling food in the refrigerator?*

You can also use questions to determine when to use *who* and when to use *whom*. Are you talking about someone who is doing something?

*Gina drives her mother’s car to school.*

Yes, you are talking about someone doing something, so use *who* in your question.

*Who drives her mother’s car to school?*

Now look at this sentence:

*The car is driven to school by Gina.*

No, the subject of the sentence (*car*) is not performing the action. Use *whom* in your question.

*The car is driven to school by whom?*

*By whom is the car driven to school?*

If you think the *whom* examples sound awkward or prissy, you are not alone. Many people don’t use *whom* in casual speech or writing. Others use it only in well-established phrases such as “to whom it may concern.” Some people never use it. It’s not unusual at all to hear sentences like these:

*Who do you believe?*

*Who should I talk to about labeling food in the refrigerator?*

Who or Whom TRICK:

Like whom, the pronoun him ends with the letter M. When you're trying to decide whether to use who or whom, ask yourself if the hypothetical answer to the question would contain he or him. If it’s him, you use whom, and they both end with M.

For example, if the question is Who did you squish? or Whom did you squish?, the answer could be I squished him. You have a him, so you know the right pronoun is whom: Whom did you squish?

That's the trick: If you can answer the question with him, then use whom, and it's easy to remember because they both end with M.

Here’s another one: If the question is Who loves you? or Whom loves you?, a simple answer could be He loves me—nothim.In this case, your answer has a he, not a him.No M, so you know the right choice is who.

Practice:

1. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_was elected the thirty-second president of the United States, was born in 1882.
2. He was the only child of James Roosevelt, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ descended from a well-to-do Dutch family in New York.
3. Franklin’s mother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was named Sara Delano Roosevelt, was very devoted to him.
4. Franklin was a very athletic young man \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_was an expert in boating and swimming.
5. In 1905, he married Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_was a distant cousin.
6. Eleanor, to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sara Roosevelt objected as a wife for Franklin, was orphaned when she was ten years old.
7. At the wedding the bride was given away by another Roosevelt \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ both Eleanor and Franklin admired.
8. This Roosevelt, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was Eleanor’s uncle, was Theodore.
9. Theodore Roosevelt, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ became president when William McKinley was assassinated, was one of the most popular presidents in U.S. history.
10. In 1920, Franklin ran for vice president as the running mate for James M. Cox, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_the voters rejected in favor of Warren Harding.
11. Less than a year later, the young, athletic Franklin, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_greatly enjoyed physical activity, was stricken with poliomyelitis.
12. His mother, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was forever present in Franklin and Eleanor’s life, wanted him to retire from politics and live as a country squire.
13. His wife, Eleanor, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ he relied on for advice and support, urged him to remain involved in politics.
14. In 1928, Franklin Roosevelt, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ had been paralyzed by polio seven years earlier, was elected governor of New York.
15. When the stock market crashed in 1929, Herbert Hoover, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_had been elected president in 1928, was blamed for the economic disaster.

(Glencoe Language Arts – Grammar and Language Workbook – 9)