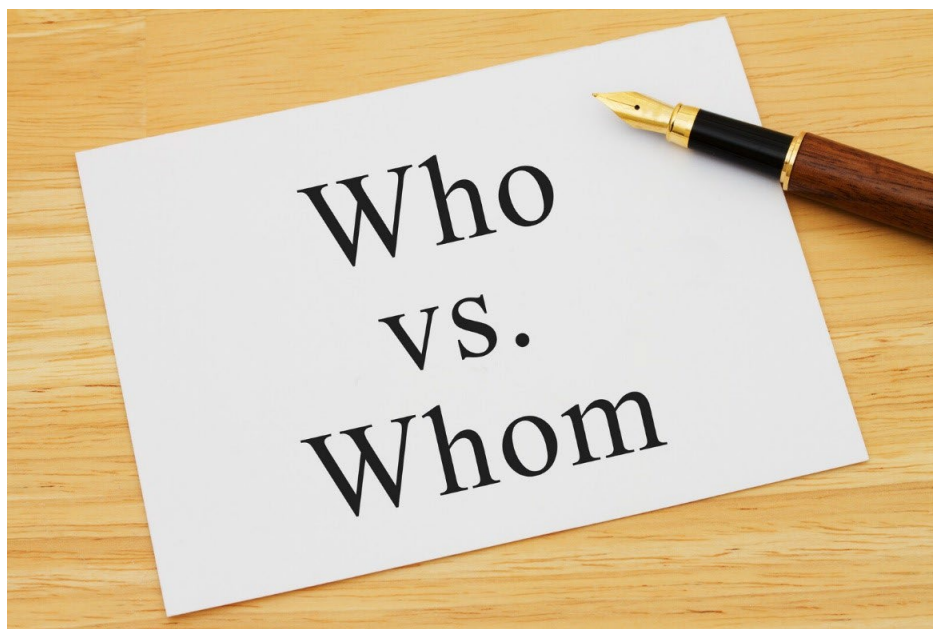


# Word for Word

Who's curious about the correct use of *who* and *whom*?



*Who* and *whom* are both relative pronouns, or pronouns that connect a clause or phrase to a person. While they both perform the same function, *whom* is considered more formal and is rarely used in spoken conversation. However, in formal communication, such as scientific publications, authors should use *whom* when appropriate. Thus, it is important to know the difference between *whom* and *who*.

*Whom* is used as an object, meaning that it receives the phrase's action. In the following example, *whom* is the object of the phrase *the awards committee chose*.

**Example:** The researcher *whom* the awards committee chose will be contacted next week.

*Who* is used as a noun, meaning that it performs the action. In the example below, the pronoun *who* is the subject of the phrase *was chosen by the awards committee*.

**Example:** The researcher *who* was chosen by the awards committee will be contacted next week.

When deciding which pronoun is correct, consider whether *he* or *him* would be used in a given phrase. If *he* is appropriate, then the relative pronoun is functioning as a subject, so *who* is correct. If *him* is appropriate, then the relative pronoun is acting as an object, so *whom* is correct.

**Example:** *whom* the awards committee chose → the awards committee chose *him*

**Example:** *who* was chosen by the awards committee → *he* was chosen by the awards committee

It can be more difficult to discern when to use *whom* and *who* in a question. If the question can be answered with a pronoun as the subject, then *who* is correct. If it must be answered with a pronoun as the object, then *whom* is correct. In other words, if the answer to the question can start with *he*, then *who* is correct. Otherwise, *whom* is correct.

**Example:** *Who* performed the literature search? *He* performed the literature search.

**Example:** *Whom* did they contact about our problem? They contacted *him* about our problem.

## Bibliography

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