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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