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Grammar Reference

1 'Which' - 'What'

'What' and 'which' may introduce **non-interrogative clauses**. In such a case:

- 'what,' which has no antecedent, **introduces** a relative clause which may be subject or object to the sentence's main verb;

Example: **What** worries me is how he'll get here.

- 'which' **relates to** an antecedent which may be a noun, noun phrase, or clause.

Example: She often smiles, **which** is nice.
You're inspecting the downtown branch, **which** has higher operating costs than the others.

In an **interrogative clause**:

- 'what' is used generally to convey a choice between or among **things**;

Example: **What** books do you prefer?
What kind of services do you want?
What time do they open?

- 'which,' which may precede both **things** and **people**, conveys a **choice** between or among a **limited number** of possibilities.

Example: **Which** friend did you invite?
Which of these shirts is yours?
Which airline did you choose?

Note. 'Which' is sometimes followed by 'one.'

Example: **Which one** do you prefer?

- Both '**which**' and '**what**' are used to talk about **choices**. When used as **question words**, they are often **interchangeable**.

Example: **What/which** products are you interested in?

What/which size would you prefer?

Note. '**What**' usually refers to **objects**, and not **people**. '**Which**' refers to **both** objects and people.

Example: **Which colleagues** are coming to the meeting?

What file are you looking for?

There are small differences in meaning between '**which**' and '**what**'.

Generally, use '**what**' to talk about a **large** and **indefinite** number of choices. Use '**which**' when the number of choices is **limited** and **definite**. To ask for more information about available choices, you can follow '**what**' with expressions such as **kind/s of**, **sort/s of**, or **type/s of**.

Example: **What** kinds of services do you offer? (services are indefinite)

What books do you recommend on the topic? (any books, rather than specific books)

What type of material is this made from?

We have five different sizes. **Which** size do you prefer? (there are only five possible sizes)

Which way should I turn when I get to Coldcreek Street? (right or left?)

Note. You can **only use which** before the **pronoun one**.

Example: We have several colors available. **Which** one do you like best?

When **which** refers to something mentioned immediately before, you may refer back to it **without** repeating the noun or using a pronoun.

Example: We have coffee, tea, or mineral water. **Which** do you prefer?

Which and **what** may fall **before** a given set of choices.

Example: **Which** do you think is more appropriate: **an e-mail or a letter**?

2 Uses of 'so'

- **'So'** + **adjective** or **adverb** is used to express an **exclamation**.

Example: Why is this taking **so long**?
Don't be **so** sensitive!

Note. **'So'** may introduce **'that'** clauses, in which **'that'** may be understood.

Example: He was driving **so** fast **that** he went through a red light.

- **'So'** may be used to introduce a clause.

Example: **So** you found a job?
It's 100% coverage, **so** it is particularly attractive.

- 'So' may replace a clause in an elliptical sentence or in tags.

Example: We thank you for flying with us
and hope you'll do **so** again.
He's late, and **so** am I.
I don't think **so**.

Note. Use of 'so' is **impossible** in certain **negative elliptical clauses**. In such cases, 'not' is used and goes after the verb.

Example: Do you think he's going to come?
I hope **not**.

3 The notion of means

The **notion of means** can be expressed by:

- **by + gerund**

Example:

How did she gain so much weight?
(She gained weight) **By eating** a lot of sweets.

How did he get that position?
(He got that position) **By working** hard.

- **by + means of + noun**

Example:

How are you going to increase the sales figures?

(I'm going to increase the sales figures)

By means of a huge advertising campaign.

Note. **By + noun of means of transport**
(**by** bus, **by** train, **by** plane / **by** air, **by** car)
is also used.

By is also used to explain how something is done:
by fax, **by** hand, **by** check.