

Which or That?

Both can be used at the beginning of relative clauses (bisatser).

Which can only refer back to inanimate objects, while **that** can refer back to a person or a thing.

Which is used in non-defining clauses (ej nödvändiga bisatser).

E.g.

The river, *which* is tidal at Stratford, is dangerous.

This book, *which* was written by Strindberg, is excellent.

Note that these sentences make sense without the relative clause, i.e. it is a non-defining clause, and that the relative clauses are surrounded by commas.

That is used at the beginning of a defining clause (nödvändig bisats)

E.g.

The river *that* flows through London is called the Thames.

This is the book *that* Strindberg wrote.

Note that these relative clauses are not enclosed in commas and that the sentences would not make much sense without them.

RULE OF THUMB

A defining relative clause (a *that* clause) forms an integral part of the sentence and cannot be put within parentheses, whereas a non-defining relative clause (a *which* clause) can be put within parentheses and its removal from the sentence would not render the sentence meaningless.