Kenyon Writing Center Quick Guide on
Which vs. That

When do you use *which*?

- *Which* is used when you’re writing with non-essential clauses. So, what are non-essential clauses?
  - *Non-essential clauses* are also referred to as non-restrictive or non-defining clauses
  - These clauses do not limit the meaning of the sentence. The meaning of the sentence will not change without the non-essential clause.
  - Example:
    - A paper, *which* has a tight deadline, might be tough to write.
      - A paper might be tough to write.

When do you use *that*?

- *That* is used when you’re writing with essential clauses. So, what are essential clauses?
  - Essential clauses are also referred to as restrictive or defining clauses.
  - These clauses impact the meaning of the sentence. They are thus essential to the sentence’s structure and meaning.
  - Example:
    - This paper *that* has a tight deadline is tough to write.
      - “*That* has a tight deadline” defines the type of paper and is thus essential to the paper’s meaning.

Some points to keep in mind:

- *Which* adds information or context to a sentence.
- *That* refers to specific things.

Resources:

- Purdue OWL [That vs. Which](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/grammar_charts/that_vs_which.html)
- Grammarly [Which vs. That](https://grammarly.com/blogs/grammar/which-vs-that/)

Citation Information:

Prof. Scanlon compiled this document; she updated it September 2022 to be more accessible. If you notice an error, need it in a different format, or have further questions or concerns, please email her at scanlon1@kenyon.edu or stop by and visit one of our tutors in Chalmers library!