



The "Write Place" AAMU

THAT or WHICH?

As college students, we often come across the problem of when to use the word “that” or “which.” Here are some tips that may help!

Commas are important: A helpful strategy for knowing whether to use “that” vs “which” is a comma. Commas indicate whether or not a clause is essential. If essential, use “that,” but if nonessential use “which.”

Using “That”

“That” is used in defining clauses giving essential information to the meaning of a sentence.

Ex. Alabama A&M University is the school that I choose to attend for my undergrad.

In this sentence you see that the speaker had at least one other school to choose from, but decided to attend the illustrious Alabama A&M. This demonstrates the ESSENTIAL aspect because it explains what the writer intends what the readers to know.

Using “Which”

Which is used in introducing a *non-defining clause* where if used, the meaning of the sentence will not change.

Ex. Alabama A&M University, which is located in Alabama, is the school I choose to attend for my undergrad.

In this sentence, the location of the school is simply a description and NON-ESSENTIAL, meaning that without the “which is located in Alabama,” the meaning of the sentence will not change.