Who vs. Whom

Knowing when to use “who” or “whom” is a common quandary for many writers. The correct usage of each word hinges on its placement and purpose in a sentence.

A quick review:
They key to understanding when to use “who” or “whom” goes back to the basic construction of a sentence: subject + verb + direct object. The subject is always a noun—a person, place or thing. The verb denotes the action. The noun receiving the action of the verb is the direct object. In the sentence, “I read the book,” the subject is “I,” the noun performing the action. The action is “read.” The noun receiving the action of the verb is the direct object “book.”

Who:
As stated, the subject of the sentence is always a noun: a person, place or thing. Subjects are also referred to being in the “nominative case.” When the subject is a person, and therefore in the nominative case, “who” is correct.

Example:  
The student who sits beside me in class is from France.  
My mom, who lives in Florida, sent me cookies!

Whom:
Direct objects, however, are considered to be in the “objective case.” The objective case of the word “who” is “whom.” In the example below, the noun “Harry” is the direct object of the verb “called.”

Example:  
I called Harry, whom I had not seen in several weeks.

Nouns that follow a preposition are also considered to be in the objective case. They are the “object” of the preposition, those short words that provide details to a sentence. Google “preposition,” and the list is almost 100 words long! Some of the most frequently used are to, as, in, out, at, for, with, on, off, above, below, near, and around. “Whom” is the correct choice, following a preposition.

Examples:  
Ask not for whom the bell tolls.  
This is Jane, with whom I play tennis every Saturday.

Another tip:
The same rule of “who” and “whom” applies to “whoever” and “whomever.”

Need more help? Schedule an appointment with the Writing Studio in 2420, 25 Park Place at http://gsu.mywconline.net/