

Appositives

What Is an Appositive?

An appositive is a noun that immediately follows and renames another noun in order to clarify or classify it. Appositives are used to reduce wordiness, add detail, and add syntactic variety to a sentence. For example, you can combine two simple sentences to create one sentence that contains an appositive.

- *Simple Sentence:* My teacher is a tough grader.
- *Simple Sentence:* Mrs. Green is a tough grader.
- *Sentence with an Appositive:* My teacher *Mrs. Green* is a tough grader.

How Can I Identify Appositives?

Appositives often immediately follow a noun; appositives always help to identify the noun.

- One or two words, often including a name: Ms. Wood, *Sally's teacher*, assigned a research project.
- Three or four words, often including some detail: Ms. Wood, *Sally's fifth grade teacher*, assigned a research project.
- Four or more words, often including extensive detail: Ms. Wood, *Sally's favorite teacher in the school*, assigned a research project.

Appositives in Introductory Phrases

The previous examples show how an appositive can come after a noun it renames. However, appositives can also stand as the introductory phrase of a sentence before the noun.

Appositives in Introductory Phrases

After a noun: Ms. Wood, *Sally's favorite teacher in high school*, is friendly and approachable.

Before a noun: *Sally's favorite teacher in high school*, Ms. Wood is friendly and approachable.

Appositives at the Ends of Sentences

Similarly, an appositive can be found as a phrase at the end of a sentence.

Appositives at the Ends of Sentences

Martha ate lunch at Chili's, *her favorite restaurant on the weekends*.

My uncle was staying at the Holiday Inn, *the most affordable hotel in the neighborhood*.

How Do I Test for Appositives?

To test to see if an appositive is needed, replace the appositive with the noun being modified. The sentence should make sense if you substitute the appositive for the noun or noun phrase.

Appositive Tests

Original sentence: Ms. Wood, *Sally's favorite teacher in the school*, is friendly and approachable.

With substitution: *Sally's favorite teacher in the school* is friendly and approachable.

How Do I Punctuate Appositives?

Appositives are punctuated differently if they are restrictive or nonrestrictive.

Restrictive Appositives

Appositives may or may not be crucial to identify the noun or noun phrase. If an appositive is necessary to understand the identity of the noun or noun phrase that is being modified, the appositive is **restrictive**. Restrictive appositives are **not** set off with commas.

Mark's teacher *John Smith* served in the army.

If we removed the appositive, we would understand that Mark's teacher served in the army. But the sentence loses clarity. Without the appositive, we are unsure which of Mark's teachers is being referred to. Therefore, this appositive is **restrictive** and has no commas.

Nonrestrictive Appositives

If an appositive is unnecessary to understand the identity of the noun or noun phrase it is identifying, it is **nonrestrictive**. Nonrestrictive appositives **are** set off with commas.

Fred's biology teacher, *Ted Jones*, served in the navy.

If we removed the appositive, we would still understand that Fred's biology teacher served in the navy. Although the appositive adds detail to the sentence, the audience already understands which specific teacher is being referred to; including the name is unnecessary. Therefore, this appositive is **nonrestrictive**.

Activity

Directions: Underline the appositive in each sentence. Identify the appositive as **restrictive** (no commas) or **nonrestrictive** (commas). Punctuate the appositive appropriately.

1. One of his favorite baseball players Barry Bonds played for the San Francisco Giants.
2. My third grade teacher Mrs. Brown is now retired.
3. President Obama the popular US president usually presents eloquent speeches.

4. The Lincoln Memorial a beautiful structure is located near the Washington Monument.
5. Sally Billy's younger sister is afraid of heights.
6. Your cousin Danielle has beautiful hair.
7. Elvis Presley my favorite musician will be legendary for decades to come.
8. A credible author Stephen King has written many horror novels.
9. My neighbor Ann an elderly woman loves to plan her own vegetables.
10. The famous musician Stevie Wonder is completely blind.

Answer Key for Activity

1. One of his favorite baseball players Barry Bonds played for the San Francisco Giants. (restrictive)
2. My third grade teacher, Mrs. Brown, is now retired. (nonrestrictive)
3. President Obama, the popular US president, usually presents eloquent speeches. (nonrestrictive)
4. The Lincoln Memorial, a beautiful structure, is located near the Washington Monument. (nonrestrictive)
5. Sally, Billy's younger sister, is afraid of heights. (nonrestrictive)
6. Your cousin Danielle has beautiful hair. (restrictive)
7. Elvis Presley, my favorite musician, will be legendary for decades to come. (nonrestrictive)
8. A credible author, Stephen King has written many horror novels. (nonrestrictive)
9. My neighbor Ann, an elderly woman, loves to plant her own vegetables. (nonrestrictive)
10. The famous musician Stevie Wonder is completely blind. (restrictive)