

Appositives

The Latin roots of the word “apposite” indicate an action, which is “to place” or “to put” a particular object in a specific location (“Apposite, *adj.*”). These roots apply to the definition of appositive and the function of the appositive phrase since appositives are *placed* beside important noun phrases.

An appositive phrase accompanies a noun phrase by providing a detail or description of a noun. An appositive phrase can precede or follow the noun phrase that it supports and can consist of one word (usually a proper noun) or several words.

Here are a few examples of an appositive phrase:

| Sentence | Noun phrase | Appositive phrase |
|--|-----------------------|---|
| They read <u>Allen Ginsberg</u> , a major Beat poet and photographer. | <u>Allen Ginsberg</u> | <i>a major Beat poet and photographer</i> |
| <u>Ruby’s brother Ethan</u> rides a bike instead of a car. | <u>Ruby’s brother</u> | <i>Ethan</i> |
| A city in Texas Hill Country, <u>Bandera</u> offers verdant scenery and temperate weather. | <u>Bandera</u> | <i>A city in Texas Hill Country</i> |

Noun Phrase

Appositive phrases are noun phrases. They work alongside noun phrases because they restate nouns using relevant details such as adjectives or names. The relationship between appositive phrases and nearby noun phrases is the key to recognizing appositive phrases in sentences. To identify an appositive phrase in a sentence, find the noun phrases in that sentence, and determine whether the accompanying phrases offer specific information about those noun phrases.

Punctuation

If the added information is essential to understanding the noun and sentence, then the appositive phrase is **restrictive** and does not require commas. However, when the meaning of the

noun and sentence *do not* depend on the appositive phrase, then that extra information is **nonrestrictive** and punctuated by commas (or one comma, depending on its placement). Notice that **non-restrictive** appositives always contain a noun and can begin with articles (a, an, the) or not. **Non-restrictive** appositives cannot, however, be placed next to a noun they are not modifying.

Here are some demonstrations of **restrictive** and **nonrestrictive** appositive phrases:

| Sentence | Noun phrase | Restrictive appositive phrase |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>Ruby's brother</u> <i>Ethan</i> rides a bike instead of a car. | <u>Ruby's brother</u> | <i>Ethan</i> |
| Stella learned about the African American experience by listening to <u>the rap album</u> <i>To Pimp a Butterfly</i> . | <u>the rap album</u> | <i>To Pimp a Butterfly</i> |
| Sentence | Noun phrase | Nonrestrictive appositive phrase |
| <i>A city in Texas Hill Country,</i> <u>Bandera</u> offers verdant scenery and temperate weather. | <u>Bandera</u> | <i>A city in Texas Hill Country</i> |
| The class liked <u>Flor's sweater</u> , <i>a striped cardigan</i> , because it was soft and stylish. | <u>Flor's sweater</u> | <i>a striped cardigan</i> |

References

“Apposite, *adj.*” *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2021,
www.oed.com/view/Entry/9760?redirectedFrom=apposite#eid.

Disclaimer: We did not include all of the resources conferred to formulate this handout. We encourage students to conduct further research to find additional resources. The format of this list is not commensurate with a standard format.