

Phrases

Appositive

An **appositive phrase** is a group of words acting as a noun that renames or explains an adjacent noun or pronoun in the sentence. It is often, but not always, enclosed within commas.

CAUTION: Be sure not to confuse your appositive phrase with an adjective clause.

Adjective Clause: The adjective clause contains both a verb and an introductory relative pronoun.

Mary, who is a real sleepy head, can sleep through anything.

Appositive Phrase: The appositive phrase doesn't contain a verb.

Mary, a real sleepy head in the morning, can stay up all night studying.

NOTE: "A real sleepy head in the morning" contains the prepositional phrase in the morning, but the whole phrase is an appositive (or explanation) about "Mary."

Study these examples: Each underlined appositive identifies the noun it renames.

- I'm reading the story *Gone With the Wind*. (identifies the story)
- Jane Hall, the best cellist in our school, will study at Juliard. (renames Jane Hall)
- This class, History of French Cooking, begins at 11 o'clock. (identifies the class)
- My trip last summer, a lengthy trek up the Andean Alps, was the highlight of my life. (renames the trip)

Exercise A. Underline each appositive phrase and circle the noun or pronoun renamed.

1. Spring, the season of renewal, is the best time to view cherry blossoms.
2. I often go to my aunt's guesthouse, the cottage on Bridge Street, after school.
3. My dad plays the clarinet, his favorite instrument.

4. I used to play *Old Maid*, an old-fashioned card game, as a child.
5. My golf ball, a nubby green comet, hit a tree before dropping into the hole.
6. Bonsai, the Japanese art of growing miniature trees, instills awe within me.
7. Joe's Master's thesis, a paper chronicling 14th Century Russia, was brilliant.
8. I was up at 1 a.m., the ghostly hour of the night.
9. Zane Grey's books, vivid descriptions of the Southwest, are very exciting.
10. *The Grapes of Wrath*, a book about the Dust-Bowl Era, was made into a movie.

Exercise B. Indicate which of the underlined parts are appositive phrases (**AP**) and which are adjective clauses (**AC**).

1. I loved your speech, "Coming of Age in the 90s."
2. I loved your speech that discussed coming of age in the 90s.
3. The kitten, a little ball of fluff, slept in the shoe box.
4. The kitten, which was a little ball of fluff, slept in the shoe box
5. My sister was born December 7, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was bombed.
6. My sister, who was born at Pearl Harbor, is a pilot.
7. You, the school representative, should know better!
8. You, who are the school representative, should know better.
9. The man who wore the plaid scarf had it wrapped around his neck.
10. The scarf, a plaid one, was wrapped around his neck.

Exercise C. Insert one of the following phrases in an appropriate slot in the following sentences to form an appositive phrase.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. a nervous giggle | b. the act of making life easier to understand |
| c. the symbol for <i>and</i> | d. the Queen and the Double |
| e. the Salk vaccine | f. best in show |
| g. a much needed respite | h. a popular children's book |
| i. that special stew Mother made last night | j. <i>Mondo Kane</i> |

1. The oral medicine for polio, _____, was perfected in the 1950s.
2. The foreign film _____ was quite shocking when I was a teenager.
3. The prize, _____, went to the Australian Shepherd.
4. John ate the last of the ragout, _____.
5. Do you know when to use the ampersand, _____ ?
6. Simplifying problems, _____, is a knack.
7. We took a break, _____.
8. Maureen's laugh, _____, showed she was uncomfortable.
9. We offer two sizes, _____.
10. *The Cat in the Hat*, _____, is available at the public library.

Exercise D. Underline and label the appositive phrases **(AP)** and those that are participle phrases **(PP)** . Remember that participial phrases use verbals as adjectives.

Study these examples.

- Sarah, gazing out over the fields, stood in the doorway of the cabin. **(PP)**
- Sarah, the woman in the doorway of her cabin, gazed out over the fields. **(AP)**

1. I achieved my goal, running the one-minute mile, last Friday.
2. The iron, searing hot metal, was ready to be used for branding the calves.
3. The heroine, gagged and bound with tape, was left in front of the train.
4. The concerned group, farmers from Iowa and Kansas, came to meet with the President of the United States.
5. Your ideas concerning the new health care plan will be reviewed tomorrow.
6. "The Happening," my party tomorrow night, will be an exciting event.

Exercise E. Change the following participle phrases in some way to become appositive phrases.

1. The cigar, casting an acrid smell up three floors, belonged to Mr. Chan.
2. Gary Cooper, acting the tall and handsome stranger, was a popular screen idol.
3. The puppy, curled into a small white ball, was a Samoyed.
4. Bells, tinkling as the wind blew, hung from the porch.
5. Stopped at the red light, the hot-rodder revved his engine impatiently.