



Appositives

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An appositive is a noun or pronoun -- often with modifiers -- set beside another noun or pronoun to explain or identify it. Here are some examples of appositives.

Your friend **Bill** is in trouble.
noun appositive

My brother's car, **a sporty red convertible with bucket seats**, is the envy of my friends.
noun appositive

The chief surgeon, **an expert in organ-transplant procedures**, took her nephew on a hospital tour.
noun appositive

An appositive phrase usually follows the word it explains or identifies, but it may also precede it.

A bold innovator, Wassily Kandinsky is known for his colorful abstract paintings.
appositive noun

The first state to ratify the U.S. constitution, Delaware is rich in history.
appositive noun

A beautiful collie, Skip was my favorite dog.
appositive noun

Punctuation of appositives

In some cases, the noun being explained is too general without the appositive; the information is essential to the meaning of the sentence. When this is the case, do not place commas around the appositive; just leave it alone. If the sentence would be clear and complete without the appositive, then commas are necessary; place one before and one after the appositive.

Here are some examples.

<p>The popular US president John Kennedy was known for his eloquent and inspirational speeches.</p> <p>noun appositive</p>	<p>Here we do not put commas around the appositive, because it is essential information. Without the appositive, the sentence would be <i>The popular US president was known for his eloquent and inspirational speeches</i>. We wouldn't know which president was being referred to.</p>
<p>John Kennedy, the popular US president, was known for his eloquent and inspirational speeches.</p> <p>noun appositive</p>	<p>Here we put commas around the appositive because it is not essential information. Without the appositive, the sentence would be <i>John Kennedy was known for his eloquent and traditional speeches</i>. We still know who the subject of the sentence is without the appositive.</p>
<p>John Kennedy the popular US president was quite different from</p> <p>noun appositive</p> <p>John Kennedy the unfaithful husband.</p> <p>noun appositive</p>	<p>Here we do not put commas around either appositive because they are both essential to understanding the sentence. Without the appositives, the sentence would just be <i>John Kennedy was quite different from John Kennedy</i>. We wouldn't know what qualities of John Kennedy were being referred to without the appositive.</p>

Exercise

Underline the appositives in the following sentences.

1. My son, the policeman, will be visiting us next week.
2. The captain ordered the ship's carpenters to assemble the shallop, a large rowboat.
3. Walter, the playboy and writer, is very attached to his mother, Mrs. Hammon.
4. The actor Paul Newman directed only one picture.
5. Elizabeth Teague, a sweet and lovable girl, grew up to be a mentally troubled woman.

Underline and punctuate the appositives in the following sentences. Remember: not all require punctuation.

6. Sweetbriar a company known throughout the South is considering a nationwide advertising campaign.
7. An above-average student and talented musician John made his family proud.
8. The extremely popular American film *Titanic* was widely criticized for its mediocre script.
9. The greatest American film ever made *Citizen Kane* won only one Academy Award.
10. *60 Minutes* the TV news magazine program featured a story on the popular singer Whitney Houston.

Answers to this exercise are available at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_apposA1.html.

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