

Appositives

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An **Appositive** is a noun that follows another noun or pronoun to identify or explain it.

My brother, *an engineer at ADI*, is coming to Bangladesh in March.

Here the phrase “*an engineer at ADI*” explains the noun “My Brother”. Appositive Phrases are essentially noun phrases.

His car, *a hulking SUV*, costs a fortune to fill up and rides like a tank.

If the Appositive phrase follows the subject noun phrase then we can move the appositive phrase to the beginning of the sentence. Appositive phrases moved out of their normal position following the noun phrase are sometimes called **inverted appositives**.

Normal Appositive: Emma, the only child in class without cavities, smiled proudly

Inverted Appositive: The only child in class without cavities, Emma smiled proudly

It is normal to invert the appositive phrase when the subject noun phrase is a pronoun.

Normal Appositive: I, a helpless romantic, always want movies to have a happy ending.

Inverted Appositive: A helpless romantic, I always want movies to have happy ending.

Essential and Non-essential Appositives

Non-essential Appositives are not required to define the noun phrases they follow. That is, we can remove the appositive and still be left with a meaningful noun phrase.

With Appositive: My brother, an engineer at ADI, is coming to Bangladesh next month.

Without Appositive: My brother is coming to Bangladesh next month.

Essential Appositives are essential to properly define the noun phrases they follow. For example,

With Appositive: My friend Ted lives in Germany.

Without Appositive: My friend lives in Germany.

A simple and reliable way to test whether an appositive phrase is essential or nonessential is to delete the appositive and see the effect on the noun phrase preceding the appositive phrase. If that noun phrase is still meaningful, then the appositive phrase is nonessential. If the meaning of that noun phrase is now inappropriately ambiguous, then the appositive phrase is essential.

Essential appositive phrases are never set off with commas. Nonessential phrases are always set off with commas.