

Sentence variety exercise 8

Appositives

Another form of adjective phrase—the appositive—is used to **rename** the noun or pronoun which it modifies. Therefore, it will always contain a noun that tells us in a different way who or what the noun it modifies is. Here’s an example:

The mayor handed Gloria, the captain of the soccer team, a commendation.

In this example the appositive modifies Gloria and renames her “the captain of the soccer team.” “Captain” is a noun and is simply another way of identifying the person to whom “the mayor handed...a commendation.” Gloria could be renamed in any number of ways. Notice how at least one noun (N) is used in each of the following appositives:

Gloria, ^N
the owner of the most successful butcher shop in Laredo, was handed a
commendation by the mayor.

Gloria, ^N
the eight-year-old hero, was handed a commendation by the mayor.

Gloria, ^N
a four-time winner of the local ping-pong tournament, was handed a
commendation by the mayor.

Gloria, ^{N N N N}
mother, nurse, teacher, and taxi driver for her four young children, was handed a
commendation by the mayor.

Also, notice that it’s very easy to move appositives to other locations in the sentence. In addition to putting it *after* the noun it modifies, we can also put it *before* the noun:

The owner of the most successful butcher shop in Laredo, Gloria was handed a
commendation by the mayor.

However, beware of putting an appositive next to a noun which it is not supposed to modify:

The owner of the most successful butcher shop in Laredo, the mayor handed Gloria a
commendation.

This sentence says something quite different than the previous sentences by renaming the mayor as “the owner of the most successful butcher shop in Laredo.”

Practice 1

Directions: In each sentence below, underline the appositive and circle the noun it modifies.

1. After days on the road, Wallace, a gaunt wanderer with washboard ribs, plodded into Las Vegas.
2. He passed the vacant faces of people whose eyes were focused on either their now empty wallets or the bright lights of places like Caesar's Palace, one of the most popular casinos along the Strip.
3. Wallace wore a tattered camouflage jungle hat, khaki shorts, and old boots—lace-up Red Wings bought along the river in Wisconsin.
4. A veteran of brutal card games in gambling dens in Saigon, he felt the attraction of chance in every doorway he passed.
5. When he approached one of the last casinos on the outskirts of the city, an Elvis impersonator, a paunchy man with a huge gray pompadour, strode directly up to him and said with a lisp, "Can you spare a buck?"
6. "Do I look like I have any money?" Wallace said. He turned both pockets in his pants inside-out, but in his left boot his toes wiggled against the remains of his fortune, a damp, thin mass of tens and twenties.

Practice 2

Directions: Combine the provided appositive and the independent clause in each item below into a single logical sentence. Be sure each appositive modifies what you intended and that it's located so the sentence reads smoothly.

1. Appositive: a perpetual thorn in his mother's side

Ind. clause: Jerry intentionally left on the headlights in the family car.

2. Appositive: the head chef at the most prestigious restaurant in Austin

Ind. clause: The writer hoped to interview Antonio Garza for an article in the food section of the Sunday paper.

3. Appositive: the television in his room

Ind. clause: His greatest distraction keeps him from getting his homework done.

4. Appositive: the captain of the Cougars

Ind. clause: The winning point of the volleyball match was served by Julia.

5. Appositive: a hairy, thumb-sized insect with brilliant yellow bands

The bee rode the wind-tossed flowers like a bull rider on a Brahma.

Punctuating appositives

Non-restrictive appositives—those that provide supplementary information rather than information essential to the meaning of the sentence—are set off from the rest of the sentence with a comma or commas. Here’s an example:

Pete Furth, the butcher in my hometown in Minnesota, looks just like the actor William Devane.

Without the appositive—“the butcher in my hometown in Minnesota”—the reader still knows who resembles William Devane: Pete Furth. Since Pete’s name is right there, the appositive provides information that is supplementary, not essential. However, restrictive appositives—those that contain information essential to the meaning of the sentence—are not set off with commas, as in this example:

The Nobel-Prize winning poet Pablo Neruda often wrote of love and the sea.

Because more than one poet has won the Nobel Prize, the appositive “Pablo Neruda” is essential information; without it, the reader will ask, “*Which* Nobel-Prize winning poet wrote about love and the sea?” Consequently, no commas set off the appositive from the rest of the sentence.

Practice 3

Directions: Add each appositive below to a sentence that you make up. Place them at the front of some sentences, others in the middle, and still others at the end; also make some appositives restrictive and others nonrestrictive. Then, be sure to punctuate your sentences correctly.

1. a large gray-haired woman with huge hoop earrings
2. the only one of its kind still on the market
3. a pale limb with ragged, festering wounds
4. black, towering formations that rose up on the horizon
5. a 1968 Corvette with a T-roof and a 427 engine
6. the Bucks starting goalie
7. a dilapidated shack with a leaky roof