The appositive is used to **rename** the noun or pronoun it modifies. It will always contain a noun that tells us in a different way who or what the noun it modifies is.

For 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.” Gloria could be renamed in any number of ways. Notice how at least one noun (N) is used in each of the following appositives:

\[ \begin{align*}
N \\
Gloria, \text{ the owner of the most successful butcher shop in Laredo,} \text{ was handed a commendation by the mayor.}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
N \\
Gloria, \text{ a four-time winner of the local ping-pong tournament,} \text{ was handed a commendation by the mayor.}
\end{align*} \]

\[ \begin{align*}
N \quad N \quad N \quad N \\
Gloria, \text{ mother, nurse, teacher, and taxi driver for her four young children,} \text{ was handed a commendation by the mayor.}
\end{align*} \]

Notice that it’s easy to move appositives to other locations in the sentence. For example it can also come **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 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, highlight 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. Wallace wore a tattered camouflage jungle hat, khaki shorts, and old boots—lace-up Red Wings bought along the river in Wisconsin.
3. A veteran of brutal card games in gambling dens in Saigon, he felt the attraction of chance in every doorway he passed.
4. 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?”
5. “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.

**Punctuating appositives**
Nonrestrictive appositives provide nonessential information rather than information essential to the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, they are set off from the rest of the sentence with a comma or commas.

Ex. 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. 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 2**
**Directions:** Add each appositive below to a sentence of your own. Place two appositives at the front, in the middle, and at the end of some sentences. Also make sure some appositives are restrictive and others nonrestrictive. Remember 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 Spurs power forward