

What Is an Appositive Phrase?

An **appositive** is a noun or pronoun that renames or identifies another noun or pronoun in some way. An **appositive phrase** consists of an appositive and its modifiers. An appositive phrase can be either essential (restrictive) or nonessential (nonrestrictive).

An essential appositive phrase provides information that is necessary for identifying the noun or pronoun that precedes it. Without the essential appositive phrase, the sentence doesn't make much sense. In contrast, a nonessential appositive phrase provides additional information about a noun or pronoun in a sentence whose meaning is already clear. It gives the reader extra—but nonessential—information. A nonessential appositive phrase should be set off with commas.

Essential Appositive Phrase Examples:

Author **William Shakespeare** wrote over 30 plays during the course of his career.

(*William Shakespeare* is the appositive phrase. It identifies *author*.)

Architect **Frank Lloyd Wright** designed many buildings, including New York's Guggenheim Museum.

(*Frank Lloyd Wright* is the appositive phrase. It identifies *architect*.)

Margaret Mitchell's novel ***Gone with the Wind*** won the Pulitzer Prize in 1937 and was made into a movie in 1939.

(*Gone with the Wind* is the appositive phrase. It identifies *novel*.)

The newspaper **The New York Times** first appeared in the 1850s.

(*The New York Times* is the appositive phrase. It identifies *newspaper*.)

Artist **Georgia O'Keeffe** famously painted many images of flowers.

(*Georgia O'Keeffe* is the appositive phrase. It identifies *artist*.)

The cellist **Yo-Yo Ma** performs concerts all over the world.

(*Yo-Yo Ma* is the appositive phrase. It identifies *cellist*.)

Nonessential Appositive Phrase Examples:

Frankie, the dog that lives next door, likes to go for walks in the park.

(The dog that lives next door is the appositive phrase. It identifies Frankie.)

Babe Ruth, **a baseball player with the New York Yankees**, held the home-run record for nearly 40 years.

(A baseball player with the New York Yankees is the appositive phrase. It identifies Babe Ruth.)

During our vacation, we went snorkeling off Cozumel, **an island in Mexico**.

(An island in Mexico is the appositive phrase. It identifies Cozumel.)

The lindy hop, **a dance style**, became popular in the 1920s.

(A dance style is the appositive phrase. It identifies lindy hop.)

Sherlock Holmes, **a character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**, continues to appear in television shows more than 100 years after his first appearance in print.

(A character created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is the appositive phrase. It identifies Sherlock Holmes.)

Rio de Janeiro, **a city in Brazil**, is famous for its Carnival celebration.

(A city in Brazil is the appositive phrase. It identifies Rio de Janeiro.)

Why Are Appositives and Appositive Phrases Important?

Whether they are essential or nonessential, appositives and appositive phrases make your writing more descriptive by providing key details about a person, place, or thing.