

THE APPOSITIVE

Recognize an appositive when you find one.

An appositive is a **noun** or **noun phrase** that renames another noun right beside it. The appositive can be a short or long combination of words.

Read these appositive examples, all of which rename *intruder*:

The intruder, **a cockroach**, is crawling across the kitchen table.

The intruder, **a large, inquisitive cockroach**, is crawling across the kitchen table.

The intruder, **a large, inquisitive cockroach with hairy legs**, is crawling across the kitchen table.

The intruder, **a large, inquisitive, hairy-legged cockroach that has spied my bowl of oatmeal**, is crawling across the kitchen table.

Here are other examples:

During the dinner conversation, Clifford, **the messiest eater at the table**, spewed mashed potatoes like an erupting volcano.

My 486 computer, **a modern-day dinosaur**, chews floppy disks as noisily as my brother does peanut brittle.

Genette's bedroom desk, **the biggest disaster area in the house**, is a collection of overdue library books, dirty plates, computer components, old mail, cat hair, and empty potato chip bags.

Reliable, **Diane's eleven-year-old beagle**, chews holes in the living room carpeting as if he were still a puppy.

Punctuate the appositive correctly.

NONESSENTIAL APPOSITIVE

A *nonessential* appositive is always separated from the rest of the sentence with **comma(s)**.

When the appositive *begins* the **sentence**, use a comma:

A hot-tempered tennis player, Robbie charged the umpire and tried to crack the poor man's skull with a racket.

When the appositive *interrupts* the sentence, use one comma in front and another comma after:

Robbie, **a hot-tempered tennis player**, charged the umpire and tried to crack the poor man's skull with a racket.

And when the appositive *ends* the sentence, use a comma:

Upset by the bad call, the crowd cheered Robbie, **a hot-tempered tennis player who charged the umpire and tried to crack the poor man's skull with a racket**.

ESSENTIAL APPOSITIVE

If, however, the appositive is *essential* (readers need the information to distinguish *which one of many* the writer means), no punctuation is needed.

Although my sister **Loretta** disapproves of the on-court temper tantrums, she still thinks Robbie is cute.

Sister, a noun that can refer to many, many females, requires the clarification that the appositive **Loretta** provides. If we flip the order of the words, commas *are* necessary:

Although Loretta, **my sister**, disapproves of the on-court temper tantrums, she still thinks Robbie is cute.

