

# Appositives

## WHAT IS AN APPOSITIVE?

An appositive is a noun or phrase that renames or describes the noun to which it is next. For example:

Richard, my brother, is taking me to the airport Friday afternoon.

Dr. Smith, a well-known lecturer, will be speaking at the conference.

In the first sentence, the appositive “my brother” renames Richard, thus identifying who he is. In the second example, the appositive “a well-known lecturer” provides a description of Dr. Smith.

## More Appositives

Sometimes, appositives and appositive phrases begin with *that is*, *in other words*, *such as*, and *for example*.

Common flavors of ice cream, such as chocolate and vanilla, are her favorites.

The winter months, for example, January and February, are the coldest.

## Essential and Nonessential Appositives

Appositives may be considered essential or nonessential depending on the context.

### Essential

An essential appositive adds information that is “essential” to the meaning of the sentence. This information is vital in identifying the previous noun. For example:

Kurt Vonnegut’s book A Man Without a Country was a compilation of his essays.

(Here, the book title is essential in establishing which book you are identifying.)

## **Nonessential**

A nonessential appositive adds more information about the previous noun; however, this information is NOT “essential” to the meaning of the sentence and is considered additional.

**Kurt Vonnegut’s last book, A Man Without a Country, was a compilation of his essays.**

(Here, the book title is considered an additional detail because it has already been identified with the words “last book.”)

Note: For more information about the punctuation of appositives, please refer to the skills pages on COMMAS and COLONS.