

Understanding Noun Phrase Appositives

What is meant by *noun phrase*?

Every sentence comprises a noun phrase and a verb phrase, commonly referred to as the subject and the predicate of a sentence. Prepositional phrases, adverbial phrases, and infinitive phrases are also frequently used, but are not required to create a complete sentence. They simply provide additional information.

Simply put, a noun phrase is a phrase that begins with a noun or any part of speech that modifies a noun (like an adjective). It does not have to be the subject of a sentence. For example, “I met the tour guide, *a notorious addict*, near the waterfront.” Here, “a notorious addict” is a noun phrase. “The tour guide” (which is the subject of the sentence) and “the waterfront” are also noun phrases in this sentence.

Additional note: A group of words containing both a noun and a verb is considered a clause, *not* a phrase. A phrase is a group of words that cannot form a complete sentence and, therefore, cannot have both a noun and a verb within it.

What is meant by *appositive*?

Literally, the word appositive means to place one thing beside another. In grammar, an appositive refers to a word or phrase placed beside another word or phrase in order to provide extra meaning. For example, “My brother, *a man without integrity*, enjoys a life of debauchery.” Here, the appositive is “a man without integrity.” It is a noun phrase that modifies the preceding noun phrase, “my brother.” Both this example and the one above contain noun phrase appositives.

Why are noun phrase appositives important?

Noun phrase appositives are useful when combining sentences. Often, early drafts of essays are bloated with unnecessary words, even entire sentences. Consider the following example. “My brother is a man without integrity. He enjoys a life of debauchery.” While there is nothing wrong with these sentences, they can be combined to form one sentence that conveys the same information with fewer words: “My brother, a man without integrity, enjoys a life of debauchery.”

Exercises:

Using noun phrases appositives, combine the sentences below. Note: you may be able to create more than one noun phrase appositive in some of the sentences.

1. Oscar Wilde made many people uncomfortable with his plays. He was an author and a playwright.

2. I bought a used car last Saturday. The car is a green Honda. Saturday was the 16th of May.

3. My niece is twelve. She is a short, blonde girl.

4. San Francisco is a city with a diverse population. It was built on a hilly peninsula. Many of the people living in San Francisco are immigrants from a variety of countries.
