

## Expanding Sentences: Are You Positive?

### Words to Know

modifier  
appositive  
noun  
pronoun

Now you are really ready to make your sentences longer and more interesting! To start, we will be working with modifiers.

A **modifier** is a part of a sentence that provides more details or explanation. The word “modify” means “to change.” By adding modifiers, we are changing a basic sentence to a more detailed sentence. Adding modifiers can help make

sentences more interesting and clear.

For this exercise, we will be working with a type of modifier called an appositive. An **appositive** is a word or group of words that *renames* or gives more *specific* details about a **noun** (a person, place, thing, or idea) or **pronoun** (a word that takes the place of a noun).

**Here is a hint to remember this:** When you look at the word **appositive**, do you see the word “positive” inside it? The word “positive” means “absolutely sure” or “certain.” So, by adding an appositive, think of it as making “sure” the reader knows exactly who or what your sentence is referring to. For example, we can say:

*Fred went to the store.*

So, which Fred are we talking about? By adding an appositive, we are making sure the reader is *positive* about which Fred we mean.

Fred, **the tall boy with the red hair**, went to the store.

So now, by adding the **appositive**, we have made absolutely **positive** that the reader knows we are talking about Fred with the red hair, and not Fred with the brown hair. Get it?

Here are a couple more examples (the appositives are in **bold**):

- *The dragon, **a fire-breathing beast**, shot flames from its nostrils.*

(Notice that the appositive is referring to the dragon and is in the middle of the sentence)

- *The captain ordered the ship, **the huge, white vessel**, to dock.*

(Notice that the appositive is not referring to the captain, but is referring to the ship, and is the middle of the sentence.)

- ***A wonderful cook, my husband likes to make fancy dinners.***

(Notice that the appositive is referring to the husband, and is now at the beginning of the sentence.)

- ***Livia is very close to her sister, Maggie.***

(Notice that the appositive is referring to the sister, and is now at the very end of the sentence.)

**Be careful! The appositive should *rename* the noun or pronoun.** Some examples:

- ***The dragon, huge, green, and scary, shot flames from its nostrils.***
  - Notice that the words “huge, green, and scary” do not *rename* the noun *dragon*, but instead, just describe it.
- ***Fred, running as fast as he could, went for the doctor.***
  - Again, notice, that the words “running as fast as he could” merely describe how Fred ran for the doctor.

To see if you really have an appositive, you should be able to remove the noun or pronoun from the sentence and the sentence should still make sense.

- ~~*The dragon*~~, ***huge, green, and scary***, shot flames from its nostrils. (This doesn't make sense as a complete sentence!)
- ~~*The dragon*~~, ***a fire-breathing beast***, shot flames from its nostrils. (This sentence—with a few edits—makes sense as a complete sentence!)

Knowing how to correctly add appositives to your writing can make your writing more descriptive and interesting.

**Directions:** Below are sentences using appositives. Underline each appositive. If there is no appositive, leave the sentence alone.

1. My aunt, the vegetarian, loves to make spinach lasagna.
2. Sarah, my six-year-old sister, is afraid of the dark.
3. During math, my favorite class, Jaime passed me a note.
4. A perfect student, Laura got a straight “A”s.
5. Upset by her students, the teacher assigned extra homework.

6. My new puppy, a cute, floppy-eared Beagle, likes to lick my face.
7. My best friend Joe has a new PlayStation.
8. Isabelle, the cute girl in my English class, asked to sit with me at lunch.
9. The book, the one we read in class, was *Of Mice and Men*.
10. We read a book about Martin Luther King, Jr., a hero of the Civil Rights movement.

**Directions:** For each of the following sentences, add an appositive on the line provided. You will need to use your imagination to come up with details and descriptions for each.

1. We went on a class trip to Washington D.C. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. We bought my favorite cereal, \_\_\_\_\_, when we went to the store.
3. The kids, \_\_\_\_\_, were learning how to solve their problems without fighting.
4. \_\_\_\_\_, my best friend, might be playing tennis this afternoon.
5. A bear, \_\_\_\_\_, escaped from the circus.
6. The dog, \_\_\_\_\_, growled at the mailman.
7. \_\_\_\_\_, my favorite teacher, took us on a field trip.