

Sentence Development Tutorial

Tutorial 16: **Noun Phrase Appositives**

This Tutorial includes two files:

- **Lesson (16a_Noun_Phrase_Appositives_Lesson)**

In order to learn the material presented in this tutorial more effectively, as you read you should take notes in a place that you can reference later. If it is convenient, you could print the tutorial and annotate it so you can keep it for future reference.

- **Exercises (16b_Noun_Phrase_Appositives_Exercises)** – located in the same area as the lesson)

- It has highlighted areas for you to answer the exercises using an application such as Adobe Acrobat Reader.
- Download and save this file as your own; you will share it with an instructor after you complete the lesson and exercises.

Please contact the Writing Center with any questions or difficulties:

csmtwc@smccd.edu or 650-574-6436.

Noun Phrase Appositives

Noun phrase appositives (NPAs) are nouns or noun phrases, which describe other nouns. NPAs are great tools writers use to bring more detail into their sentences. Usually noun phrase appositives begin with *a*, *an*, or *the*. In the examples below, the noun phrase appositive is underlined. You can see that each sentence is complete, *without* the noun phrase appositive. That is, each sentence has a subject and a verb and is a complete idea, and the noun phrase appositive (NPA) simply modifies or provides extra information about another noun.

- subject*
NPA
verb

• [Allen Ginsberg,] a famous poet, wrote [“Howl,”] a controversial poem.
- subject*
NPA
verb

• [Allen Ginsberg,] the author of “Howl,” was one of the most controversial poets of the 1960s.

Principle I. A noun phrase appositive (NPA) always must contain at least one noun, must be located next to the noun that it modifies, and must be set off by commas.

In the following examples, you can see that each NPA contains a noun, is located *next to* the noun it modifies, and is set off by commas. The noun that the NPA describes or modifies is in brackets, each NPA is underlined, and the noun in each NPA is in boldface.

- noun modified*
NPA
noun modified
NPA

• [Allen Ginsberg,] a famous **poet**, wrote [“Howl,”] a controversial **poem**.
- noun modified*
NPA

• [Allen Ginsberg,] the **author** of “Howl,” was one of the most controversial poets of the 1960s.

Principle II. A noun phrase appositive (NPA) that consists of a series of noun phrases is usually set off by dashes.

In the following examples, you can see that the NPA consists of a series of noun phrases and is set off by dashes. The noun that the NPA modifies is in brackets, each NPA is underlined, and the noun in each NPA is in boldface.

- noun modified* *NPA (series of noun phrases)*
- Allen Ginsberg's [friends]—**Jack Kerouac, Richard Brautigan, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Ken Kesey**—also became well-known poets and writers.

- noun modified*
- In the 1960s, Allen Ginsberg wrote several controversial [poems]—**“Howl,”**

NPA (series of noun phrases)
“Walt Whitman in the Supermarket,” “1962,” “Friends and Lovers.”

Principle III. As long as it is located next to the noun that it modifies, a noun phrase appositive (NPA) can occur anywhere in a sentence.

In the following examples, the noun or noun phrase that the NPA modifies is in brackets, each NPA is underlined, and the noun in each NPA is in boldface.

A noun phrase appositive (NPA) can precede the noun that it modifies:

- A controversial **poet** and social **critic**, [Allen Ginsberg] quickly developed a bad reputation.

A noun phrase appositive (NPA) can follow a noun in the middle of a sentence:

- [Allen Ginsberg,] a controversial **poet** and social **critic**, was known worldwide as a radical writer.

A noun phrase appositive (NPA) can follow a noun at the end of a sentence:

- [Allen Ginsberg,] a controversial **poet** and social **critic**, wrote [“Howl,”] a **poem** about self-expression.

Please open your 16b exercises file and complete Exercise 1.

Since noun phrase appositives (NPAs) restate or describe a noun or noun phrase, they can be:

Quite short

NPA

- My cousin, the **hostess**, is trying too hard.

Or very long

NPA

- I met an interesting man, a **dentist who works with young children that do not have health insurance**.

Make sure NPAs modify the correct noun.

Notice what happens when the following sentences are combined with a misplaced NPA:

The patient suffered when the dentist extracted a wisdom tooth.
She was a slender, fourteen year-old.

(To combine the sentences, simply change the second sentence into the following NPA: “a slender, fourteen year-old” and insert it into the first sentence.)

Incorrect: The patient suffered when the dentist, a slender, fourteen-year-old girl, extracted a wisdom tooth.

(If we insert it here, we have a slender, fourteen year old dentist.)

Incorrect: The patient suffered when the dentist extracted a wisdom tooth, a slender, fourteen-year-old girl.

(If we insert it here, we have a slender, fourteen year old tooth!)

Correct: The patient, a slender, fourteen-year-old girl, suffered when the dentist extracted a wisdom tooth.

(*The patient* is the correct noun being modified; the NPA gives us further information about her.)

Please open your 16b exercises file and complete Exercises 2 and 3.

Final Activity

Instructions:

1. Review a classroom essay that you are working on and try to incorporate noun phrase appositives into your own writing.
2. Make an appointment for a conference with an instructor working in the Writing Center. To make this appointment, sign up using the same method you use to make essay conference appointments. Be sure to include a comment or note that you are meeting about a tutorial.
3. During this appointment, the instructor will make sure you understand the concepts covered in this tutorial, answer any questions that you might have, review your answers to the exercises, and check to see if you can incorporate the skill into your writing.