

TROUBLESHOOTING ON TUESDAY

The Comma Rules Keep on Coming...

Rule when dealing with **non-essential information** in a sentence:

Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off words, phrases or clauses that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence. If you are unsure of whether the information is or isn't essential, try removing the word or phrase from the sentence and see if the original meaning is preserved.

- **Word:** You are a hard worker. In this case, however, you outdid yourself.
- **Phrase:** The restaurant is pretty. The food, on the other hand, is rather bland.
- **Clause:** Tomorrow, which is my birthday, is the only day that I can meet.

Another example of non-essential information--the **appositive**:

An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that renames another noun right beside it. It explains or adds to the noun but is not necessary for the sentence's meaning. If you remove an appositive, the sentence still reads coherently. Therefore, you set off an appositive using the rule above. An appositive can be a short, medium or long combination of words.

- **Short:** The insect, a cockroach, is crawling across the kitchen table.
- **Medium:** The insect, a large cockroach with hairy legs, is crawling across the kitchen table.
- **Long:** The insect, a large, hairy-legged cockroach that has spied my bowl of oatmeal, is crawling across the kitchen table.

It is important to remember that no matter where the appositive appears in the sentence, it must be separated from the rest of the sentence with a comma or commas.

- **Beginning:** A hot-tempered tennis player, Robbie yelled at line judge.
- **Middle:** Robbie, a hot-tempered tennis player, yelled at the line judge and stomped off the court.
- **End:** The crowd ignored Robbie, a hot-tempered tennis player who yelled at the line judge and broke the poor man's nose with his racquet.

Practice Makes Perfect

Directions:

1. Read over each sentence.
2. Underline the non-essential information.
3. Insert the comma or commas where needed to "set off" this non-essential information.
4. Put an "A" in front of the number of any sentence in which the non-essential information is an appositive.

Note: It may be necessary to insert additional commas using the other rules we have learned.

1. My Aunt Bertha who works in a shoe factory is taking me to the Teletubbies Museum.

2. We urge you therefore to vote early and often.

3. Clifford the messiest eater at the table spewed mashed potatoes like an erupting volcano.

4. Gina's bedroom desk the biggest disaster in the house is a collection of overdue library books dirty plates old mail and empty candy wrappers.

5. The oldest competitor Penelope won the tiddly-wink competition.

6. Using hedgehogs for balls and flamingos for mallets is obviously a strange way to play croquet.

One final thought: How are these sentence different from the ones above?

Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* is a classic tale of forbidden love.

The man who ordered another double anchovy pizza claims to have a pet dolphin in his backyard pool.