

RESTRICTIVE or NON-RESTRICTIVE

CLAUSES

Consider the following sentences. Which sentence refers to which picture?

I cut down the trees which were over six feet tall.

I cut down the trees, which were over six feet tall.



RESTRICTIVE CLAUSES are relative clauses that serve as an adjective that **restricts or limits** the meaning of the noun or pronoun and therefore receives NO COMMA.

*My father told the **woman** who called yesterday that I was not home.*

NON-RESTRICTIVE CLAUSES are similar to **Parenthetical Elements**. However, the idea does not mean that the information is not important **but** that it is not important to understand the **intended meaning of the sentence**. In other words, it is extra information that is set off by **COMMAS**.

*My father told **Mary**, the woman who called yesterday, that I was not home.*

The RULE of 'THAT' and 'WHICH'

While traditionally **'that'** was used only for Restrictive Clauses and **'which'** was used only for Non-Restrictive Clauses, the latter has now become used for both; however, **'that'** remains firmly comma repellent. Consider the following examples and their paraphrases.

*The students can eat the box of donuts **that** is in the kitchen.*

There are **two** boxes of donuts. Only the one in the kitchen should be eaten by students. Eating the box in the teacher's office will anger your teachers.

*The students can eat the box of donuts, **which** is in the kitchen.*

The teacher has a box of donuts for the students. It's in the kitchen.

PHRASES or (P)arenthetical E)lements)

The concept of restrictiveness also applies to other **phrases**, such as (1) appositives, (2) participial & infinitive phrases, and (3) examples.

1. APPOSITIVES : (N (P) + N (P))

Noun and noun phrases that rename an adjacent noun or noun phrase.

Darwin's most **important** book, *On the Origin of Species*, was the result of much research.

Josh Whedon's **first** television series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, ran for eight seasons.

The above are Non-Restrictive as "**most important**" and "**first**" limit the meaning to one title.

Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* is considered by many to be the first modern novel.

Joss Whedon's television series *Firefly* was a tremendous success even though it was cancelled.

Herman Melville wrote many novels, and Joss Whedon directed multiple television shows. These Restrictive Elements are limiting the noun to a specific one. Consider the following Non-Restrictive unreduced versions:

Moby Dick, **which was written by** Herman Melville, is considered to be the first modern novel.

Moby Dick, **by** Herman Melville, is considered to be the first modern novel.

Names, however, are often **not** set off by commas. Here the NOUN and the NAME are considered closely related. This involves some consideration by the author of his audience.

Her brother Johnny lives in Walla Walla.

School president Tom Wilson was not there when the incident occurred.

However, an appositive which refers to the listener is **always** parenthetical.

I'm telling you, Michael, you better be here on time tomorrow.

2. PARTICIPIAL & INFINITIVE PHRASES : (S + V → ~~X~~ (to) V ↔ V(ing/ed))

These can serve as nouns and therefore behave as **appositives**. Note that the defining adjectives of "**primary**" and "**most recent**" that make the examples below Non-Restrictive.

*Tom's **primary** goal, to become a fluent English speaker, is quite an endeavor.*

*The school's **most recent** activity, running fire drills every day, has proven unpopular.*

With **non-specific nouns** the Participial & Infinitive phrases **can** be Restrictive.

*The **student** running through the hall tripped and fell.*

Pablo, running through the hall, tripped and fell.

Same but Different: Note that Participial & Infinitive Phrases also create **adverbial phrases**. They are always **dependent** and are adding context rather than specifying the noun.

Not realizing there were books on the floor, the student tripped and fell.

The student, not realizing there were books on the floor, tripped and fell.

It's possible that previous context has made the noun clear and an **adverbial phrase** looks like an **appositive**; however, commas will clarify that it is additional information.

The student, running through the hall, tripped and fell.

Running through the hall, the student tripped and fell.

3. EXAMPLES:

Conjunctive Adverbs

(comma ALWAYS follows)

for instance - for example - in particular - namely
that is - case in point - some examples include - specifically

The above **conjunctive adverbs** can start sentences **OR** can be inserted into sentences. When inserted into sentences, they are parenthetical and are set off by commas.

INCORRECT: * *Some words are really confusing **for example** concretely.* *

1. ***For example**, some topics need clarification, **for instance**, words like "things" or "items".*
2. *Students have trouble with certain phrases, **for example**, on deciding if they need a comma.*
3. *Students have trouble with certain acronyms. **For instance**, "i.e." & "e.g." are common examples.*
4. *Some adverbs, **for example**, "specifically", work as conjunctive adverbs and pure adverbs.*

The second comma in example **four** is considered **optional** for short words or phrases. Independent clauses, as in **three**, can also be set off by a **semicolon**, a **dash**, or dual **parenthesis** instead of a period.

"Such as"

(comma NEVER follows)

The prepositional phrase '**such as**' is different than the conjunctive adverbs above because it cannot start a sentence. Also, it may link either Restrictive or Non-Restrictive phrases and clauses, whereas the conjunctive adverbs above will always be parenthetical.

INCORRECT: * *Some English words are difficult; **such as**, I find "worcestershire" tricky.* *

A preceding comma is determined by whether the following examples **define** or **identify** (Restrictive) or **illustrate** (Non-Restrictive) the noun or noun phrase they modify.

*My favorite classes are English classes, **such as** writing and grammar.*

*English has some really strange words, **such as** "brilligdickity" and "winklepicker".*

The sentence is complete and the idea is complete without the list of specific instances. The list just **illustrates** the meaning of "English classes" but does **not** restrict it. So it is Non-Restrictive and needs a comma.

*Students have trouble with phrases **such as** "according to" and "on the other hand".*

*The students were unable to carry things **such as** books and laptops.*

Note that "things" is an unspecified category and means everything, including pencils. If you rewrote this sentence to name the category, a comma would be necessary.

*The students were unable to carry some of their school supplies, **such as** books and laptops.*

"Like" & "Including"

(comma NEVER follows)

The word "**like**" has many meanings but one of them can work like '**such as**' and can be Restrictive or Non-Restrictive. It is also more informal, makes a comparison more than it shows inclusion, and is usually used with only one example.

Words like "antidisestablishmentarianism" make English learners gasp.

The word "**including**" is always Non-Restrictive and is reduced form of "this includes".

This lesson has provided numerous examples, including this one.

TRY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE

1. R Families whose incomes are below a certain level pay no income tax.
2. NR My family, whose income is more than \$50,000, pays about 25 percent income tax.
3. The sun which in 40 minutes can produce enough solar energy to meet humankind's needs for a year is one of Earth's potential sources of power.
4. We are at the beginning of a medical computer revolution, according to an article that appeared in Time magazine.
5. A medical computer is a machine that analyzes the results of laboratory tests and electrocardiograms.
6. A physician who feeds a patient's symptoms into a computer receives a list of diseases that fit the symptoms of that patient.
7. Laser beams which are useful in both medicine and industry were first predicted in science fiction stories 75 years ago.
8. The country that has the highest per capita' income is not the United States which is in third place.
9. Kuwait which is a small country in the Middle East is in first place.
10. It was a thrilling experience to meet the author of the book that we had been reading all semester.
11. The public is highly critical of the tobacco industry whose profits have been increasing in spite of the health risks of smoking.
12. Carbohydrates which are composed of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen are organic compounds.
13. People who use body language to express themselves are interesting to watch.
14. My brother-in-law who is from Italy moves his hands a lot when he is talking.
15. The man whom the president nominated to the Supreme Court is an experienced and respected judge.
16. X-ray machines are gradually being replaced by machines that can provide clearer, more detailed images of the human body, its tissues, and its organs.
17. X-ray machines are gradually being replaced by CAT scanners and MRI devices which can provide clearer, more detailed images of the human body, its tissues, and its organs.
18. The company promised to reimburse' everyone who had bought a defective product.
19. Students whose grade point averages fall below 2.0 will be placed on probation.
20. She plans to marry her childhood sweetheart whom she has known since they were five years old.

Per capita: per person (literally, "per head" in Latin).
Body language: communication by body movements.
Reimburse: pay money back
Defective: flawed, not in working condition

Electrocardiogram: heart monitor
Physician: a doctor
Thrilling: exciting
nominated: to suggest someone for a position.

Create your own pair of sentences using a restrictive and non-restrictive clause and then explain the difference by paraphrase or example.
