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 (Parenthetical Elements)

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 **un**reduced 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 → ~~S~~ (to)V or 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, are moveable, and add context rather than specify a 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 phrases. Rather than a period, Independent clauses, as in **three**, can also be set off by a **semicolon**, a **dash**, or **parenthesis**.

"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 only **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.*

Exercise: Restrictive or Non-Restrictive

Directions: Underline the relative clause and write R or NR in front of each sentence.
If you choose NR place commas where they are needed.



Example:

__R__ Students <u>whose grades are below a certain level</u> cannot progress.

__NR__ My students, <u>whose grades are averaging around a B-</u>, are writing their final paper.

_____ 1. Saturn which has 62 moons ranging from less than one mile wide to larger than Mercury is the solar system's second largest planet.

_____ 2. We were very excited to talk to the author who wrote our favorite novel.

_____ 3. The beginning of the industrial age began with the loom and not the steam engine according to Pynchon's essay which appeared in the *New York Times*.

_____ 4. The biometric analyzer is a machine that compiles information such as heart rate, blood pressure, and body fat.

_____ 5. A teacher who has their students submit essays through Turnitin receives an originality report.

_____ 6. Electrocardiograms which are useful in medicine and psychology show brain activity across a time frame.

_____ 7. The country that has the highest reading scores for 15-year-olds in 2015 was Singapore which is also first in Science and Mathematics.

_____ 8. The United States which is the country with the largest GDP was in 24th place.

_____ 9. Proteins which are made up of amino acids and peptide bonds are essential for cell function.

_____ 10. The Internet which was predicted to be a great boon for democracy may turn out to be one of the biggest threats to free speech and open societies.

_____ 11. Privacy concerns have been a major criticism of the social media industry whose profits have made it one of the largest growth sectors in the U.S. economy.

_____ 12. People who walk around campus while looking at their phone are good reminders to pay more attention to nature.

_____ 13. My sister-in-law who is from Spain uses her hands a lot when she talks on the phone.

_____ 14. The car manufacturer promised to give everyone who had bought the 2010 model between March and April a new car.

_____ 15. Students who fail to pass a course three times are subject to expulsion.

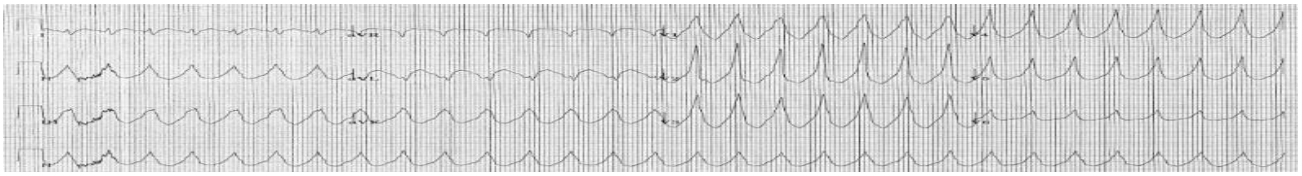
_____ 16. She plans to marry her childhood sweetheart whom she has known since they were five.

_____ 17. The woman whom the university president appointed to the committee is an experienced educator.

_____ 18. Dr. Mill who was appointed to the committee by the president is an experienced educator.

19. Cellphones are gradually being replaced by phones that can provide more apps, memory, and connectivity.

20. Cellphones are gradually being replaced by smartphones and phablets which can provide more apps, storage, and connectivity.



Activity

Directions: Create a pair of sentences that are very similar in meaning; **however**, one must be restrictive and the other non-restrictive. Do **not** mark the non-restrictive clause with commas **until** you have shared your examples with a classmate. **Discuss** your answers.

Use the TOPICS below to brainstorm ideas on how to contrast specific nouns from general ones.

devices used by younger people - homework given by teachers - improvements made by cities
social media becoming more popular – hobbies people enjoy – food representing your culture

1.

2.