

Essential & Nonessential Clauses/Phrases

REVIEW: What is a clause?

A clause MUST contain a _____ and a _____!

Examples:

- 1) The elephant snorted loudly.
- 2) Although the elephant snorted loudly, the monkeys slept soundly.

Can you spot the difference?

Example #1: The man who ordered another double pepperoni pizza claims to have a pet dolphin in his backyard pool.

Example #2: **Mr. Hall**, who ordered another double pepperoni pizza, claims to have a pet dolphin in his backyard pool.

The Essential Clause/Phrase vs. the NONessential Clause/Phrase

An ESSENTIAL clause/phrase is necessary for the reader to understand exactly who or what the sentence is referring to, while a NONESSENTIAL clause/phrase just provides extra information.

In other words: *it's the difference between "man" and "Mr. Hall"*

A _____ clause/phrase is always set off by _____.

Another Example

Example #1: Freddie hopes to return to the city where he met a woman with haunting green eyes.

Which of the many cities of the planet? *The one where Freddie met a memorable woman!*

Example #2: Freddie hopes to return to Los Angeles, where he met a woman with haunting green eyes.

We know the city is Los Angeles, so who he met there is just extra information. Notice how punctuation changes when the clause is NONessential!

Identifying Essential/Nonessential Clauses STEP-by-STEP

FIRST: Circle the noun being described by the clause/phrase (directly before the clause/phrase).

SECOND: Ask: "Is the noun specific? Do we know exactly who or what is being talked about?"

If NO: It's an essential clause/phrase!

If YES: It's a NONessential clause/phrase! Add commas where necessary.

*TRICK: "**that**" is always essential (**no commas**) and "**which**" is always nonessential (**commas**)

Let's Practice!

DIRECTIONS: Underline the clause. Circle the noun it's describing. Identify it as "essential" or "nonessential" in the space after the sentence. Add commas if necessary.

1. The car that Madeline purchased from a newspaper ad belches black smoke whenever she accelerates. _____
2. Javier who served the salad did not notice the caterpillar nibbling a lettuce leaf.

3. The rats are nesting in the closet where Grandma hides her money. _____
4. The birds which never showed fear of the vehicle watched as we swerved around them.

Practice A

DIRECTIONS: Underline the clause. Circle the noun it's describing. Identify it as "essential" or "nonessential" in the space after the sentence. Add commas if necessary.

1. Anthony who won the race became the first one in our class to receive a trophy.

2. My left ankle which I broke last winter is still too weak for track. _____
3. The teacher was annoyed when Hillary who lives right across the street from school was late. _____
4. The cats sitting in the window are called Tiger Lily and Sam. _____
5. Our City Hall which was built in 1912 is now too small. _____
6. Mahalia Jackson who grew up singing in a church choir became a famous gospel singer.

7. Children who get everything they want often appreciate nothing. _____
8. Anita who has no sense of humor couldn't see what made the joke funny. _____
9. Some people don't enjoy any game that they don't win. _____
10. Have you heard of Lorraine Hansberry who was a famous playwright? _____

Practice B

DIRECTIONS: Read each sentence. If the sentence needs commas, add them. If not, write "Correct" after the sentence.

1. Were Daniel's directions which were very brief clear to you?
2. Mark Twain who tried a dozen different types of jobs became a writer.
3. Few people who claim to be able to predict the future can actually do so.
4. Shakespeare's father who was a merchant in Stratford served for a time as "high bailiff," or mayor, of the town.