

Restrictive and Nonrestrictive Clauses and Phrases

When you have nonrestrictive (**nonessential**) elements in a sentence, set them off with commas. You must decide if the information is essential or not. For instance, you read this sentence: “The little boy is lost.” If there is more than one little boy in the room, more information is needed to identify the lost one. You can see that this sentence tells you more: “The little boy who is wearing the blue sweater is lost.” That additional information is essential, so you do not use commas.

But if only one little boy was around and you read this sentence- “The little boy, who does not seem to be more than five years old, is lost” – you would use commas around the additional information because it is really nonessential.

One final note: The use of **that implies a restrictive (essential) clause or phrase! So no commas are needed.

Ex: Animals that are not properly groomed are miserable.

Add commas around the nonrestrictive (nonessential) clauses and phrases.

1. People who live near Gus are lucky because he shares his garden vegetables with them.
2. Cindy who is my favorite cousin is a good creative writer.
3. Grandma wearing her bonnet and Grandpa’s old work clothes should not spend so much time weeding the garden.
4. People who do not like the beach are hard to find.
5. Restrooms that are dirty ought to be illegal.
6. The garden which was quite beautiful contained many varieties of tomatoes.
7. Susan who enjoys all kinds of music often attends concerts.