

Comma Clause Detectives

Sort clauses by whether they identify or add detail.

ELA.11.C.3.1 "Follow the rules of standard English grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling appropriate to grade level."

NAME _____

DATE _____

ESSENTIAL CLAUSE

An essential clause gives information needed to identify the noun. Do not set it off with commas.

The recipe that uses saffron takes longer to prepare.

EXTRA CLAUSE

An extra clause adds information that is not needed to identify the noun. Set it off with commas.

Our neighbor, who restores violins, invited us inside.

1 SORT _____ 8 items

Circle ESSENTIAL or EXTRA for each sentence, then pick two items and explain whether their clauses identify the noun or add extra information.

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. The hikers who carried maps reached the shelter before dark. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |
| 2. The article that challenged the policy drew many comments. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |
| 3. Ms. Alvarez, who teaches astronomy, organized the observatory trip. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |
| 4. The paintings that hang in the east gallery are on loan. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |
| 5. The final speaker, whose remarks were brief, received a standing ovation. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |
| 6. Our old printer, which jams often, needs repair. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |
| 7. The river, which flooded last spring, now runs quietly. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |
| 8. Students who miss the rehearsal must contact the director. | ☐ ESSENTIAL | ☐ EXTRA |

2 PROVE IT Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ HOW I KNEW _____

ITEM # _____ HOW I KNEW _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN One of each

Write one new sentence with an essential clause and one new sentence with an extra clause.

ESSENTIAL _____

EXTRA _____

CHALLENGE

Write one sentence that has both an essential clause and an extra clause, using commas only around the extra clause.

PART 1 • SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The hikers who carried maps reached the shelter before dark.	ESSENTIAL	The clause identifies which hikers reached the shelter, so no commas are used.
2	The article that challenged the policy drew many comments.	ESSENTIAL	The clause identifies which article drew comments, so no commas are used.
3	Ms. Alvarez, who teaches astronomy, organized the observatory trip.	EXTRA	The clause adds information about Ms. Alvarez, who is already identified by name.
4	The paintings that hang in the east gallery are on loan.	ESSENTIAL	The clause identifies which paintings are on loan, so no commas are used.
5	The final speaker, whose remarks were brief, received a standing ovation.	EXTRA	The clause adds information about the already identified final speaker.
6	Our old printer, which jams often, needs repair.	EXTRA	The clause adds information about the identified printer.
7	The river, which flooded last spring, now runs quietly.	EXTRA	The clause adds information about the identified river.
8	Students who miss the rehearsal must contact the director.	ESSENTIAL	The clause identifies which students must contact the director, so no commas are used.

PART 2 • PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 • MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **ESSENTIAL:** The candidates who submitted portfolios received interviews.
- **EXTRA:** My cousin, who lives in Denver, studies architecture.

Challenge: The scientist who led the expedition, whose notes filled three journals, spoke at the museum.

For Part 2, accept explanations that correctly identify whether a clause is needed to identify the noun or adds extra information. In student-created sentences, check that commas surround only extra clauses.