

Punctuation Boundaries

Spot punctuation that surrounds extra details.

7.L.GC.1.49 “Mechanics: Use commas, parentheses, and dashes to set off nonessential words, phrases, or clauses. (Master)”

NAME _____

DATE _____

SET OFF CORRECTLY

A nonessential detail gives extra information. In a COMPLETE sentence, matching commas, parentheses, or dashes separate the detail from the rest of the sentence.

Jordan (an avid astronomer) visited the observatory.

NOT SET OFF CORRECTLY

In an INCOMPLETE sentence, a nonessential detail is missing punctuation on one side or is not fully separated from the sentence.

The mango, ripe and sweet filled the basket.

1 SORT _____ 8 items

For each sentence, circle COMPLETE or INCOMPLETE, then choose two sentences and explain which punctuation marks, or missing marks, helped you decide.

1. The astronaut, tired after training, waved to the crowd.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

2. The recipe (from my aunt) makes twelve cookies.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

3. The bicycle, with a broken chain rolled into the garage.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

4. The volcano--silent for centuries--stood above the island.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

5. Our neighbor (a skilled carpenter built a treehouse.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

6. The puppy, despite its small size, barked loudly.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

7. The river--after the storm overflowed its banks.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

8. The coach, who had played professionally called a timeout.

COMPLETE

INCOMPLETE

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 COMPLETE sentence with a nonessential detail set off correctly. Then write one INCOMPLETE sentence with a nonessential detail that is missing needed punctuation.

COMPLETE _____

INCOMPLETE _____

CHALLENGE

Correct your INCOMPLETE sentence, then write the same nonessential detail using a different kind of punctuation.

PART 1 • SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The astronaut, tired after training, waved to the crowd.	COMPLETE	The nonessential phrase "tired after training" is set off by commas on both sides.
2	The recipe (from my aunt) makes twelve cookies.	COMPLETE	The nonessential phrase is enclosed by opening and closing parentheses.
3	The bicycle, with a broken chain rolled into the garage.	INCOMPLETE	The nonessential phrase needs a comma after "chain."
4	The volcano--silent for centuries--stood above the island.	COMPLETE	The nonessential phrase is set off by a dash on each side.
5	Our neighbor (a skilled carpenter built a treehouse.	INCOMPLETE	The nonessential phrase is missing a closing parenthesis.
6	The puppy, despite its small size, barked loudly.	COMPLETE	The nonessential phrase is set off by commas on both sides.
7	The river--after the storm overflowed its banks.	INCOMPLETE	The nonessential phrase needs a second dash after "storm."
8	The coach, who had played professionally called a timeout.	INCOMPLETE	The nonessential clause needs a comma after "professionally."

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)

- **COMPLETE:** The parade, which began at noon, passed our school.
- **INCOMPLETE:** My uncle (an expert photographer took pictures at the festival.

Challenge: My uncle (an expert photographer) took pictures at the festival. My uncle, an expert photographer, took pictures at the festival.

Accept double hyphens as dashes in these plain-text sentences. In each COMPLETE item, the extra detail can be removed and the remaining sentence still makes sense.