

Modifiers

A modifier is one or more words that describe other words. Two common errors involving modifiers are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.

1. Misplaced Modifiers When a modifier is in the wrong place, the reader may not know what it is meant to describe. Misplaced modifiers can lead to misunderstandings. To correct a misplaced modifier, place it as close as possible to what it is describing so that its meaning will be clearly understood.

Examples:

1) Misplaced Modifier: The Bensons watched the parade of high school bands sitting in the chairs on their lawn. It sounds as if the high school bands were sitting in chairs, when really it is the Bensons who are sitting in chairs.

Corrected version: Sitting in chairs on their lawn, the Bensons watched the parade of high school bands.

2. Dangling Modifiers: A modifying word or phrase that starts a sentence must be followed right away by the word it is meant to describe. Otherwise, the meaning of the sentence is changed, and the modifier is said to be dangling.

Examples:

1) Dangling Modifier: When pulling out of the driveway, the hedge blocks Tracy's view. This sentence is saying that the hedge is pulling out of the driveway.

Corrected Version: When pulling out of the driveway, Tracy finds that the hedge blocks her view.

A) Directions: Underline the word or phrase that is the modifier and circle the word that the modifier is describing. Try to fix the misplaced or dangling modifier in the space provided. There may be more than one correct way to fix a misplaced or dangling modifier.

1. Thrown in a heap on the closet floor, Jean found her son's dirty laundry.

2. Carrying the main course, the roast slid off its platter.

3. We were surprised to hear a siren driving down the country road.

4. While taking a shower, a mouse ran across my bathroom floor.

5. The instructor told the students to sit down in a loud voice.

6. The children placed their soup on the window sill, which was too hot to eat.

7. After her husband's death, the widow almost refused all invitations to go out.

8. Involved in a noisy game of Monopoly, the summer evening together was an enjoyable one for us.

9. Growing thinner every day, Albert's diet is really working.

10. Whining and twitching, the dog's dream must have been about chasing rabbits.

B) Directions: Read each of the passages and fix any misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers in the space provided. There may be zero, one, or multiple errors in each passage. There may be more than one correct way to fix a misplaced or dangling modifier.

1. Will was disappointed when he looked in the refrigerator. There had been lots of spaghetti last night. His roommates, however, almost had eaten all of it. Frowning angrily, nothing but a few strands of spaghetti were left.

1st Mistake: _____

2nd Mistake: _____

Rewrite the passage correctly:

2. Lani stopped to watch with amazement as the sidewalk artist worked on his next masterpiece. He was drawing a pencil portrait of a little girl. Sketching quickly, the portrait took shape under the artist's careful hand.

1st Mistake: _____

2nd Mistake: _____

Rewrite the passage correctly:

3. I lost my raincoat last fall. I thought I had looked everywhere for it. Then, yesterday, I spotted it stuffed under my bed. Although wrinkled and dusty, the raincoat was still as beautiful as I remembered it.

1st Mistake: _____

2nd Mistake: _____

Rewrite the passage correctly:

4. The sky was blue and clear when we arrived home. Only minutes later though, there was a sudden crash of thunder. Rushing like mad, the windows in the bedrooms were closed. Staring out at the downpour, we were glad to be safe inside. Then we remembered our open car windows, groaning with dismay.

1st Mistake: _____

2nd Mistake: _____

Rewrite the passage correctly:

5. Going to camp was a nightmare for me. Being afraid of water, swimming was a frightening experience. I got a terrible case of poison ivy all over my legs, which seemed to be everywhere at the camp. I will always remember my time at camp as the longest week of my life.

1st Mistake: _____

2nd Mistake: _____

Rewrite the passage correctly:
