**Modifier Basics**

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that modifies—that is, gives information about—another word in the same sentence. For example, in the following sentence, the word "burger" is modified by the word "vegetarian":

***Example:*** I'm going to the Saturn Café for a **vegetarian** burger.

* The modifier "vegetarian" gives extra information about what kind of burger it is.

A modifier can be an [adjective](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/partsofspeech#s-lg-box-9131415) (a word that modifies a noun, like "burger"), but it can also be an [adverb](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/grammar/partsofspeech#s-lg-box-9131415) (a word that modifies a verb):

***Example:***The student **carefully** proofread her draft.

* The adverb "carefully" is the modifier in this example—it modifies the verb "proofread," giving important details about how the proofreading was conducted.

A modifier can even be a phrase or clause, as in the following example:

***Example:*** She studied **in the library**.

* Here, the phrase "in the library" gives us extra information about the verb, "studied*."*

Modifiers can also be used for sentence variety. See this page on [varying sentence structure](https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/writingcenter/scholarlyvoice/sentencestructure) for more information.

**Misplaced Modifiers**

When a modifier is ambiguously or illogically modifying a word, we consider it a *misplaced modifier*.

***Example:*** Dolger discovered an ancient Mayan civilization **using astronavigation**.

* The modifier, "using astronavigation," is unclear in this sentence. Does it modify "Dolger" or "civilization"? A reader will wonder, "Was Dolger using astronavigation? Or was the civilization he discovered using astronavigation?"

***Revision 1:* Using astronavigation**, Dolger discovered an ancient Mayan civilization.

* This modifier placement makes it clear that "Dolger" is the one using astronavigation.

***Revision 2:*** Dolger discovered an ancient Mayan civilization that used astronavigation.

* This modifier placement makes it clear that the "civilization" used astronavigation.

**Dangling Modifiers**

When a modifier is not modifying a specific word, we call it a *dangling modifier.*

**Example: After consulting a selection of current publications**, research in this area has been sparse.

* I n this example, it is not clear who is consulting the selection of current publications. In other words, there is no referent in the sentence.

**Revision 1: After consulting a selection of current publications, I** determined that the research in this area has been sparse.

* Now the subject in the sentence “I” matches the modifier “after consulting a selection of current publications.”

**Revision 2: According to the selection of current publications, research** in this area has been sparse.

* Now the modifier “according to the selection of current publications” matches the subject “research.”