



# Modifiers- Introduction and Types

Special class

SVA

transitive  
intransitive

Object is not necessary

~~S + V~~

John = the happiest man

She is beautiful

John is the happiest man  
S V

go!

attack!

you

come in!  
verb



My guide is the stars, runs

S

Subject  
complement

the stars are my guide

My best friend is John's  
John my best friend

My guide = the stars

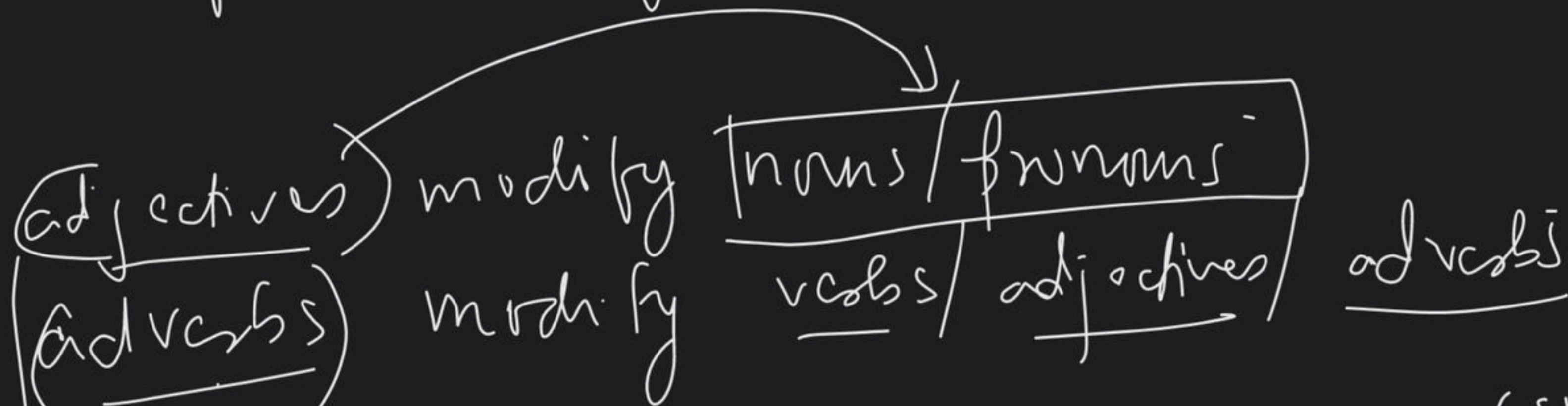
John kicked Peter

~~Peter kicked John~~

~~Peter was kicked by John~~



modifiers modify a noun, a pronoun, verb



word-  
style

sweetly decorated

richly endowed

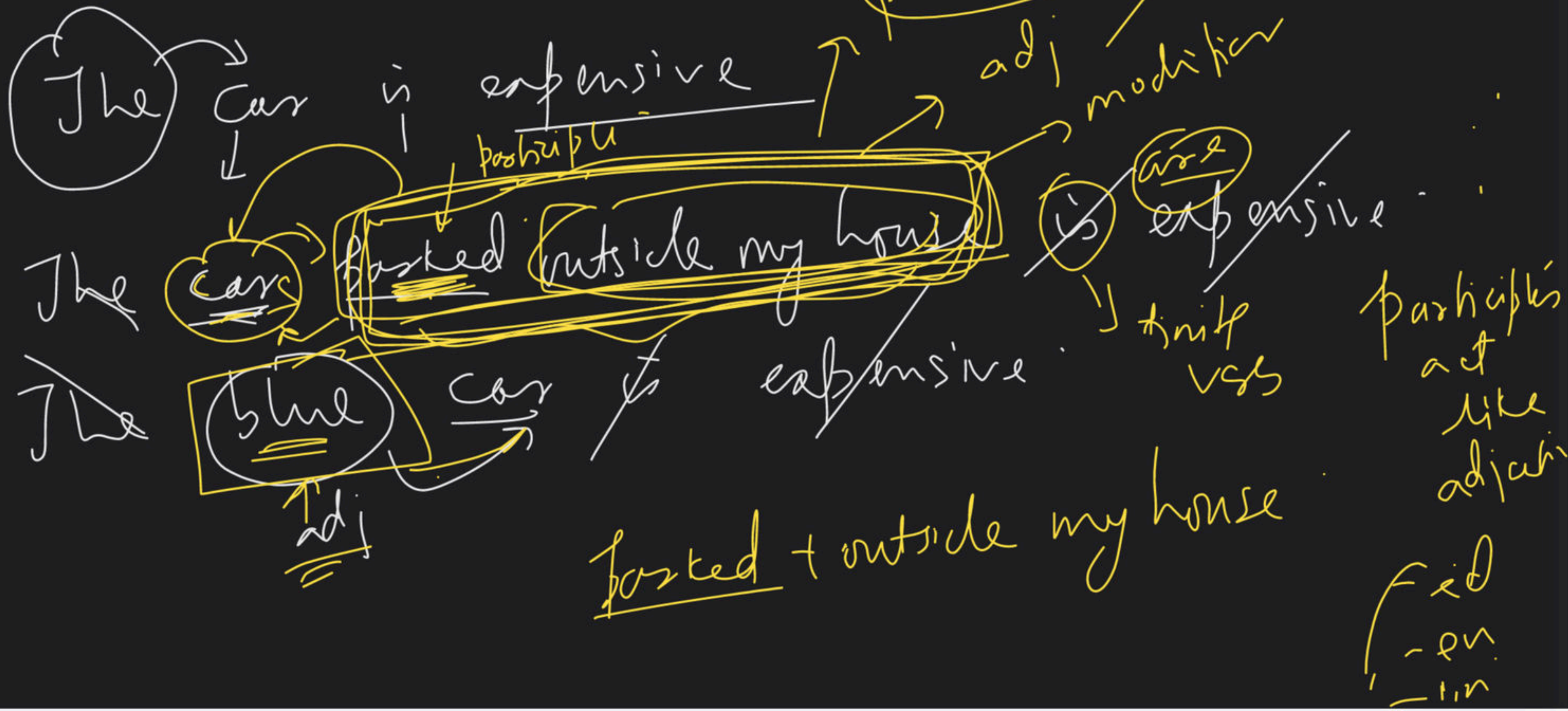
extravagantly (sophisticated) entire

(sweet) →  
(sweetly) person  
(richly) man  
(rich) → man

sophistication



Even a phrase and a clause can act like modifiers





9 don't like (mobile phones) (made in China)  
 hv mv noun object participial phrase  
 S

Mobile phones made in China  
 S participial phrase

don't does not  
 hv mv  
 don't last word  
 hv mv  
 adj → noun

(mobile phones)  
 (A mobile phone)



The bridge connecting howrah and Calcutta is about to get renovated.  
 S' ed, -ing; en  
participle phrase ↓  
verb ↓  
Infinitive

People broken by the army take  
 People swim in the army take  
 are likely to take  
 refuge in alcohol  
 Connecting howrah & Kolkatta, the bridge is



Disappointed by my GMAT exam

thought of writing CAT

modifier

S

verb

Bridging the gap between

(participial phrase)

Stoicism and Hedonism

Nihilism is a powerful philosophy



<sup>v</sup>  
(Directed by Karan Johar and  
Written by Gopil Sharma,

~~at~~  
Toilet at prem  
Katha was  
a black ~~black~~

[Participle phrase,  $S + V$ .  
 $S$ , participle phrase,  $V$   
~~S + V + U~~.

$S + V + U$ ,  $\downarrow$



Before we discuss modifiers and the different types of modifiers, we will begin with a simple sentence.

*Ankit jumped* (Ankit is the subject; jumped is the verb)

*Desperate Ankit jumped quickly*

*Desperate Ankit, the only son of a lawyer, jumped quickly on the road*

*Desperate Ankit, the only son of a Supreme Court lawyer, jumped quickly on the road to hug his friend.*

We observe that by skillful introduction and addition of words and phrases, even a simple sentence may be long and difficult, and may express much.

**The words and the phrases that we have added above are called modifiers; in a short, a modifier could be a word, a phrase, or a clause.**

**When a single word acts like a modifier, the word is usually an adjective or an adverb; when a phrase acts like a modifier, the phrase is usually a prepositional phrase, an absolute phrase, an appositive phrase, a participial phrase, or an infinitive phrase.**

*(NOUN PHRASE, GERUND PHRASE and VERB PHRASE never act like modifiers for other elements in the sentence, though they might have modifying elements in them)*

But, what are these modifiers? **Modifiers give some extra information about an element of a sentence; that element could be a noun, a pronoun, a verb, or an adjective; the information or the description that modifiers add are such that even if that information or description is removed from the sentence, the sentence will still make complete sense.**

In short, modifiers add color to your ideas; without modifiers, our sentences instead of being colorful and expressive would appear dull and lifeless. Modifiers allow writers not only to club ideas and their descriptions but also to cut down on unnecessary sentences.

**Rakesh would enter the library** (a plain simple sentence without any modifier)

**Whenever he was free, young Rakesh, who was known for his carefree nature, would, swinging his arms, gleefully enter the library in the middle of the night to read ‘Romeo and Juliet, one of Shakespeare’s greatest plays.**

*Whenever he was free*-Adverb Clause

*Young*-Adjective



Who was known for his carefree nature -Adjective Clause

Swinging his arms-Participial Phrase

Gleefully-Adverb

In the middle of the night-Prepositional Phrase

To read 'Romeo and Juliet'-Infinitive Phrase

One of Shakespeare's greatest plays- Appositive Phrase

Thus, we see that by adding descriptions we can give life and color to our sentences; but this adding must be done in accordance with the prescribed rules of grammar.

→ Participial  
Phrase = adjective

Like adjectives, which describe a noun or a pronoun, participle phrases describe a noun or a pronoun. Therefore, they, like adjectives, must be kept as close as possible to the thing they modify.

Here are some examples:

↑ verb  
The books lying on the table belong to me (in this sentence, the subject is 'the books', the verb is 'belong'; 'lying' is the participle that is the head of the participle phrase 'lying on the table', which acts like an adjective to the noun 'the books')

How does the participle phrase act like an adjective?

The red book belongs to me (the adjective 'red' modifies the noun 'book')

The book lying on the table belongs to me (the adjective 'red' gives way to the participle phrase 'lying on the table')

↓ written by Kachi Sawant  
Devastated by her GMAT score, the student committed suicide ('the student' is the subject of the sentence, 'committed' is the verb. 'Devastated' is the head of the participial phrase 'devastated by her GMAT score', which modifies the noun 'the student')

S Janet has been to each and every world heritage site located in India ('Janet' is the subject of the sentence; the corresponding verb is 'has been'; 'located' is the participle that is the head of the participle phrase 'located in India', which modifies the noun 'site')

Thus we see that in each of the examples discussed above, the participle phrase was right next to the object it modified. Whether the participle phrase should be placed immediately before or after the object it modifies is a matter of choice, style and clarity.

"located in India, The Taj Mahal"



### Punctuating the participial phrase:

Since the participial phrases are nothing but descriptions, they might come in commas, depending on whether the description is necessary or unnecessary, and whether the description comes at the start, in between, or at the end of the sentence.

If a participle phrase begins a sentence, a comma should be placed at the end of the phrase:

Surprised by the manager's behavior, the employee decided to put in her papers  
(because the sentence starts with the participial phrase 'surprised by the managers behavior', we must have a comma at the end of the phrase)

John, stupefied by the waiter's arrogance, walked out of the restaurant ('John' is the subject of the sentence; the verb is 'walked'. The participial phrase 'stupefied

by the waiter's arrogance' has been put in commas because the phrase gives extra information or unnecessary information)

If the participial phrase comes in between a sentence, the phrase should be put in commas if it gives unnecessary or extra information; if the information is vital, then the commas should be left out.

~~The man apprehended by the police is my uncle~~ ('apprehended by the police' is necessary information as the 'the man' cannot be sufficiently identified without the participial phrase)

~~Mumbai, located on the eastern coast of India, is one of the biggest commercial hubs of the world~~ ('located on the eastern coast of India' is the participial phrase that adds extra information, because the proper noun 'Mumbai' is enough for us to identify the object even if the description is removed)

If a participial phrase comes at the end of a sentence, a comma usually precedes the phrase if it modifies the entire sentence or an earlier word in the sentence but not if the phrase directly follows the word it modifies.

Germany scored 7 goals in the semifinal against Brazil, stunning football fans across the globe (since the participial phrase 'stunning football fans across the globe' modifies Germany and not Brazil, the comma precedes the participle)

I have often seen Lucy staring at me (since the participial phrase 'staring at me' modifies Lucy and not the pronoun 'I', no comma has been placed before the phrase)

She stays alone in her suburban mansion, separated from her husband and her in-laws (since the participial phrase 'separated from her husband and her in-laws' modifies the pronoun 'she' the comma precedes the phrase)

The President walked out of the room, smiling at all of us (since the participial phrase 'smiling at all of us' modifies 'The President', the comma precedes the phrase)

mobile phones made in China



(The student) sitting behind me, is disturbing me

necessary  
information

participle  
phrase

to identify the students

(gangs of Wasepur), directed by  
Anurag Kashyap,

action into

is a great  
move



Rohul Gandhi has left for Bangkok.

Surprised by the recent election results, R.G. has left for Bangkok.

R.G., surprised by the extra, has left

R.G. has left for Bangkok, surprised by the



*S-V modifier*  
*time*  
**In 1964, The Soviet Union issued warnings to USA** *IC* **creating fears of another World War** *modifier*  
(since the participial phrase 'creating fears of another World War' modifies the entire sentence by showing a consequence of an event mentioned in the main clause, the comma precedes the phrase)

### Examples of sentences using participial phrases incorrectly

She handed out brownies to the children *stored in Tupperware*

I smelled the oysters coming down the stairs for dinner

I brushed my teeth after eating with Crest Toothpaste

Driving like a maniac, the deer was hit and killed.

With his tail held high, my father led his prize noodle around the arena.

I saw the dead dog driving down the interstate.

Playing pool in the living room, the radio was turned on by Jim.

Having an automatic stick shift, Nancy bought the car.

Freshly painted, Jim left the room to dry.

### ABSOLUTE PHRASES AS MODIFIERS

Absolute Phrases are the strangest of all the phrases in English Grammar. This strangeness is not a result of complexity but a result of unfamiliarity. We frequently come across noun, gerund, verb, participle, infinitive and prepositional phrases in common speech and writing, but seldom do we come across absolute phrases even in formal writing, much less in formal or informal conversation.

**So, what is so unique about it? Absolute phrases are found in quality literature, and using the absolute phrases effectively is a sign of good writing skills.**

**Absolute phrases usually have a NOUN + PARTICIPLE + OPTIONAL MODIFIER(s)**

In short, an absolute phrase is a compressed idea that does not have a finite verb, though the noun in the phrase deceptively appears to be the subject.

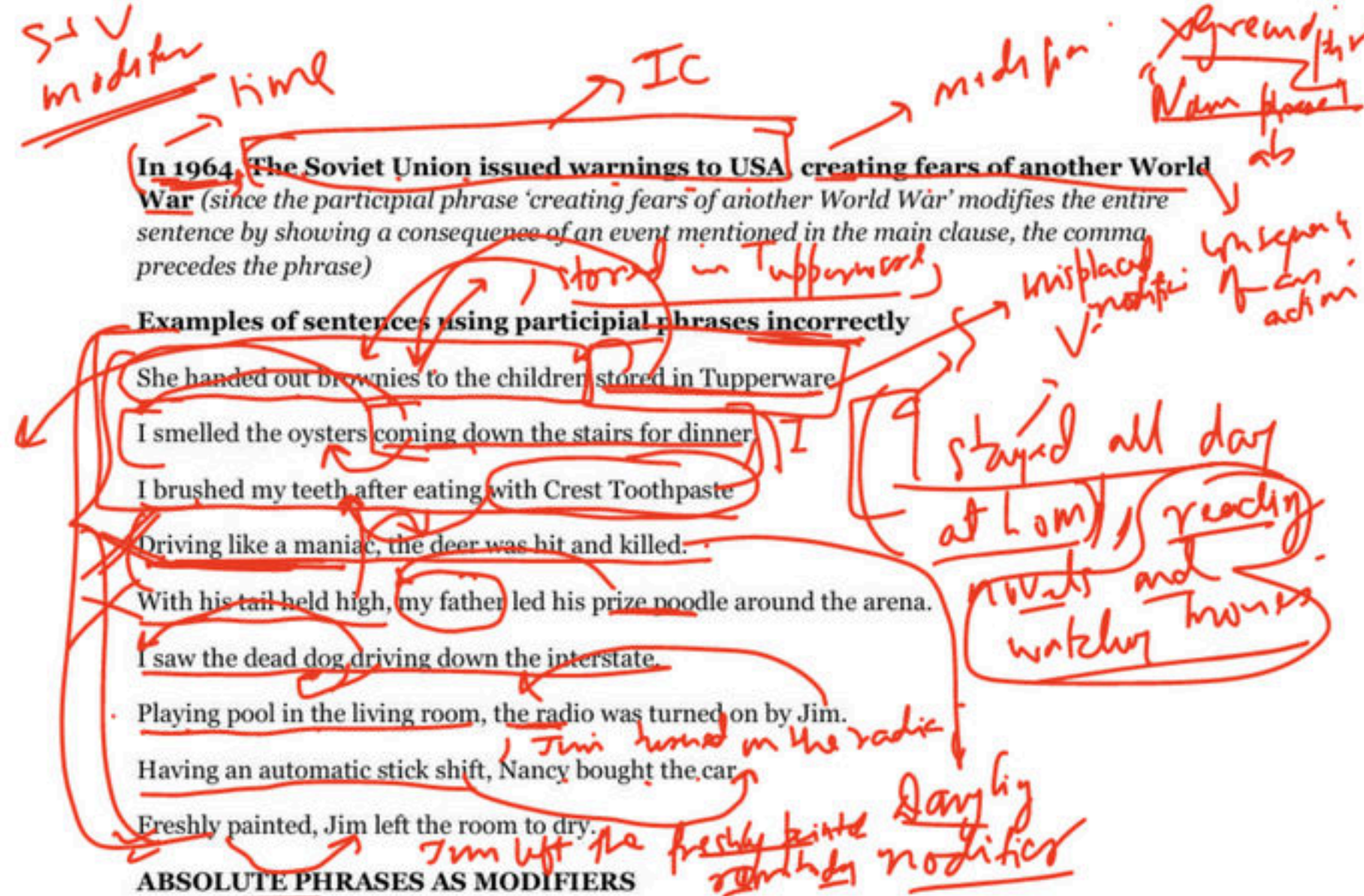
Here are a few examples:

**His arms folded across his back, Narayan was anxiously waiting for his son**

(*'Narayan was anxiously waiting for his son' is the main idea of the sentence; 'his arms folded across his back' is the absolute phrase, which does not have a finite verb; instead it has the past participle 'folded' followed by a modifier, which is a prepositional phrase*)

**The children rushed towards the magician, their eyes filled with unusual delight**

(*'The children rushed towards the magician' is the main idea of the sentence; 'their eyes filled*





*with unusual delight' is the absolute phrase, which does not have a finite verb; instead it has the past participle 'filled' followed by a prepositional phrase that acts like a modifier)*

**The color of its skin perfectly matching with the bark of the tree, the lizard was stealthily advancing in the direction of its prey** (*'the lizard was stealthily advancing in the direction of its prey' is the main idea of the sentence; 'the color of its skin perfectly matching with the bark of the tree' is the absolute phrase, which does not have a finite verb;*

*instead it has the present participle 'matching' followed by a prepositional phrase that acts like a modifier)*

#### **What is the significance of absolute phrase?**

Unlike participial phrases, which modify a specific entity, usually a noun or a pronoun, absolute phrases usually modify the entire independent clause before or after which they are placed. So, the absolute phrase is more in sync with the entire idea expressed in the main clause than with a any particular noun or pronoun in that clause. Absolute phrases express an idea, which, though connected to the main idea, is not so important as the main idea expressed by the independent clause.

**The children rushed towards the magician- Main idea**

**Their eyes filled with unusual delight- an idea expressed in the form of absolute phrase; it is not so important as the main idea but somehow runs parallel to it.**

In all of the above examples of absolute phrases, we have noticed the pattern:

**Noun + participle + modifiers**

~~In short, ABSOLUTE PHRASES DON'T HAVE A FINITE VERB!~~

#### **APPOSITIVE PHRASE**

Appositive phrases are far more common than absolute phrases. There is not much of a difference between an appositive phrase and a noun phrase; the only difference is that an appositive phrase renames another noun just beside it.

**The richest man of the 21st century passed away this morning** (*'the richest man of the 21st century' is the noun phrase, and also the subject of the sentence)*

**Barren Wuffet, the richest man of the 21st century, passed away this morning** (*Here, 'Barren Wuffet' is the subject of the sentence, while 'the richest man of the 21st century' is the appositive phrase modifying the noun 'Barren Wuffet')*

**In short, all appositives are noun phrases, but all noun phrases many not appositives.**

Here are some examples:



**Shakespeare, the bard of Stafford-upon-Avon, is my distant cousin** (*the bard of Stafford-upon-Avon* is the appositive phrase modifying the noun 'Shakespeare')

**Charles Darwin, the man who challenged the biblical version of creation, was, in his private life, a very religious and god-fearing person** (*the man who challenged the biblical version of creation* is the appositive phrase modifying the noun 'Charles Darwin')

**Brijesh Pandey, the man who wrote this article, has had no formal or academic training in English Grammar** (*the man who wrote this article* is the appositive phrase modifying the noun 'Brijesh Pandey')

### RESUMPTIVE MODIFIERS

In English grammar, a resumptive modifier is a modifier that repeats a key word (usually at or near the end of a main clause) and then adds informative or descriptive details related to that word. It's a device that allows the writer to extend any sentence almost indefinitely. To create this modifier, one should pick a key word and then resume the idea with a relative clause.

For example,

Edith looked out on the morning, the soft bright morning that struck her dazzling eyes.

It was the sort of morning when the air gives us a feeling of anticipation--a feeling that, on a day like this, things surely cannot go joggling along in the same dull old groove.

Wharton depicted women caught between constraint and the possibilities of a new sexual freedom--a freedom that she herself enjoyed, though at a high cost.

Remember that well-chosen verbs send a message to the reader, the message that the writer has crafted the sentence with care.

The practice of spiritual exercise must begin with desire, the desire that the phenomenal world may become diaphanous and that true Being may shine through.

Being generous and hospitable people, Tom and Pat went out and purchased, as a special treat for me, the largest lobster in the history of the Atlantic Ocean, a lobster that had

probably been responsible for sinking many commercial vessels before it was finally apprehended by nuclear submarines.

Why to use the resumptive modifier?

The resumptive modifiers help us to emphasize a particular idea or line of thought; the element of repetition found in resumptive modifiers helps us achieve that purpose. In the above sentences, the parts in yellow are the resumptive modifiers.



### **SUMMATIVE MODIFIERS**

As the name suggests, summative modifiers sum up in a noun or a noun phrase that which was going on in the earlier part of a sentence—often the main clause—and continues the discussion with a relative clause

In 2005, I became the head of finance for the college cultural festival, a position that brought with it many responsibilities.

In 1991, the government of India introduced economic reforms, an event that has had a great impact on the economic policies of the subsequent governments.

I got married in 2005, a disastrous event that changed the course of my life.

How to construct summative modifiers?

First, you have to end the grammatically complete sentence with a comma; then choose the noun or the noun phrase that correctly captures the key element of that complete sentence, and then continue the idea with a relative clause

### **FREE MODIFIERS**

Free modifiers usually come at the end of a sentence, and can be broadly classified into two categories:

The 'Verb Modifying' free modifiers or the 'Sentence Modifying' free modifiers. They often begin with an –ing participle.

The verb-modifying free modifier adds information about the action, the state, or the process denoted by the verb; the sentence-modifying free modifier modifies the entire sentence, and usually show consequence of a particular action We will take examples of both the kinds.

The President walked out of the room, smiling at all of us

Germany scored 7 goals in the semifinal against Brazil, stunning football fans across the globe

What is the importance of resumptive , summative and free modifiers?

These modifiers help us to create variety in our expressions; without this variety our expressions might remain graceless and monotonous.



## CLAUSES as MODIFIERS

### ADJECTIVE CLAUSE

To completely understand adjective clauses, we must first understand ‘complex sentence’.

A Complex Sentence consists of one independent clause and one or more subordinate clauses. Both the independent and the dependent clauses have a subject and a verb; the independent clause is complete and meaningful; but to make complete sense the subordinate or the dependent clause depends on the independent clause.

To understand the difference between dependent and independent clauses, we will compare the following sentences.

**A young Hindu militant shot Mahatma Gandhi** (*THIS SENTENCE HAS ONLY ONE INDEPENDENT CLAUSE; Subject– A young Hindu militant; verb–shot; object–Mahatma Gandhi*)

**A young Hindu militant, who is a member of Hindu Mahasabha, shot Mahatma Gandhi**

The new element here is: **who is a member of Hindu Mahasabha**. *This new element is a clause because it has a subject ‘who’ which points at the noun ‘militant’, and a verb ‘is’; this new element has its own pair of subject and verb; it is called a dependent clause because it can’t stand on its own.*

He who abuses others– Can we call this a sentence? No, we cannot; this sounds incomplete because it is incomplete. It has the subject ‘He’ followed by an adjective clause ‘who abuses others’; the subject ‘He’ does not have a verb, and we know that without a verb a sentence cannot exist.

Let’s complete this sentence:

**He** [who abuses others] **abuses his own self**–This makes complete sense because it has a subject ‘He’ and a verb ‘abuses’ along with an adjective clause ‘who abuses others’. An adjective clause modifies a noun or a pronoun. Here the adjective clause modifies the pronoun ‘He’.

**Adjective clauses are usually joined by a relative pronoun such as: who, whom, which, that. In certain cases we might use a subordinating conjunction, or a conjunctive adverb. Since the adjective clauses are often joined by a relative pronoun, the adjective clauses are also referred to as Relative clauses.**

**In short, relative clauses and adjective clauses are one and the same thing.**

Let’s take a few examples:

**He prayed for those who were very close to him.**



*He prayed for those [main clause] who were very close to him [adjective clause, or relative clause, connected to the main clause by the relative pronoun ‘who’]; the adjective clause thus acts like a modifier to the pronoun ‘those’.*

**He came to an orchard where ripe pomegranates could be plucked.**

*He came to an orchard [main clause] where ripe pomegranates could be plucked [adjective clause connected to the main clause by the conjunctive adverb ‘where’ and modifying the noun orchard]*

**There comes a time when we all feel sad**

*There comes a time [main clause] when we all feel sad [adjective clause connected to the main clause by the conjunctive adverb ‘when’ and modifying the noun time]*

Adjective clause can be classified as restrictive or non-restrictive; by restrictive we mean adjective clauses that provide essential information, and by non-restrictive we mean adjective clauses that provide non-essential information.

**The man who stole my car is right here in this shop**

*In this example, the adjective clause ‘who stole my car’ provides essential information, for without this information we wouldn’t be able to identify the man; we should, therefore, not insert restrictive information in commas.*

**John, who stole my car, is right here in this shop**

*In this example, the adjective clause ‘who stole my car’ provides non-essential information, because even if this information is removed from the sentence, the proper noun ‘John’ would be sufficient for us to identify the person.*

Whether the elements are restrictive or non-restrictive depends on what exactly the writer has in mind.

**Examples of sentences that have incorrectly placed adjective clauses**

He held the umbrella over Janet’s head that he got from Delta Airlines.

He wore a straw hat on his head, which was obviously too small.

The girl was consoled by the nurse who had just taken an overdose of sleeping pills.

**Where to place the modifiers?**

Modifiers can come at the beginning of a sentence, as:

Although I was annoyed, I kept on thinking about her all the while– Dependent clause acting as a modifier



To ensure that the students did well in the exam, the English teacher took a number of vocabulary tests– Infinitive phrase acting as a modifier

Softly and gently, he whispered the secret in my ears – Adverbs acting as modifiers

Seeing the unexpected results, John immediately left for home– present participial phrase acting as modifier

Modifiers can come in the middle of a sentence, as:

John, offended by the remarks of his teacher, was almost in tears–past participial phrase acting as a modifier

William Shakespeare, the bard of Avon, was born in 1564– the appositive acting as a modifier

Modifiers can come at the end of a sentence, as:

Germany scored 7 goals in the semifinal against Brazil, stunning football fans across the globe – present participial phrase acting as a modifier

She stays alone in her suburban mansion, separated from her husband and her in-laws–past participial phrase acting as a modifier

Combination of modifiers:

Softly and gently, Janet, the most beautiful girl in town, whispered ‘I love you’ in my ears, a bold act that surprised everyone around me.

The above sentence has three modifiers: adverb phrase ‘softly and gently’; appositive phrase ‘the most beautiful girl in town’; and a summative modifier ‘a bold act that surprised everyone around us’





1. {  
- The pen that is on the table is expensive → pen  
- The pen is on the table that is expensive  
    ↓ table

house  
modifier

appositive, summative, resumptive  
assum