

## DANGLING AND MISPLACED MODIFIERS

**Dangling Modifiers** are words or phrases that do not have a clear term to modify in a sentence. Often, they can be found at the beginning of sentences, though they can also appear at a sentence's end. They frequently include an -ing word (gerund) and to + verb (infinitive) phrase near the start of a sentence.

**Misplaced Modifiers** are words or phrases that do not clearly point to the word or phrase they modify, in this way obscuring meaning.

**Directions:** In the blank beside each sentence, indicate whether that sentence contains a dangling modifier (DM) or a misplaced modifier (MM). Then rewrite the sentence to correct it. Check the answers by using the key below. Because rewritten sentences will vary, have a writing counselor check your new sentences for you.

Examples:

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| a. At the age of six, my mother sang hymns to me.                                      | <u>DM</u> |
| Correction: When I was six, my mother sang hymns to me.                                |           |
| b. We were told at midnight the concert would begin.                                   | <u>MM</u> |
| Correction: We were told the concert would begin at midnight.                          |           |
| 1. The car on the bridge which is green is mine.                                       | <u>MM</u> |
| 2. Expecting confusion, our plans were made.   | <u>DM</u> |
| 3. Feeling hot, sweaters were taken off.   | <u>DM</u> |
| 4. I showed my dog to the veterinarian with the fleas.                                 | <u>MM</u> |
| 5. Larry told me he was getting married that afternoon at night.                       | <u>MM</u> |
| 6. This typewriter is used by a secretary with a wide carriage.                        | <u>MM</u> |
| 7. Swimming out into the sea, the current grew stronger.                               | <u>DM</u> |
| 8. Walking along the bridge, a ship suddenly appeared.                                 | <u>DM</u> |
| 9. The Honda was stalled on the road out of oil.                                       | <u>MM</u> |
| 10. He kept a black book of all the girls he had dated in his desk.                    | <u>MM</u> |
| 11. On entering the room, the messages are easily seen.                                | <u>DM</u> |
| 12. While at the park, the sun shone brightly on the sunbathers.                       | <u>DM</u> |
| 13. Mary should jump at whatever is demanded quickly.                                  | <u>MM</u> |
| 14. He kept all his medicine in the medicine cabinet that had been prescribed for him. | <u>MM</u> |
| 15. When only a baby, Mom took me scuba diving.  | <u>DM</u> |

ANSWERS:

- |       |       |        |        |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| 1. MM | 5. MM | 9. MM  | 13. MM |
| 2. DM | 6. MM | 10. MM | 14. MM |
| 3. DM | 7. DM | 11. DM | 15. DM |
| 4. MM | 8. DM | 12. DM |        |

## MISPLACED MODIFIERS WORKSHEET

Write "C" if the modifier is correctly placed. Write "MM" if it is misplaced. Then, in the "MM" sentences, circle the modifier and draw an arrow to show where it should go.

- MM 1. The man was stopped for speeding in the blue sweater.
- MM 2. I almost saw the whole movie, but I fell asleep around midnight.
- MM 3. Joe promised to mow the lawn running out the door.
- MM 4. The initials were those of the lovers carved on the tree.
- C 5. There are only two parking spaces left in the lot.
- MM 6. Every four hours the doctor told him to take a pill.
- C 7. Sitting on the porch, I smoked my last cigarette.
- MM 8. The woman walked toward us wearing the feather hat.
- MM 9. The jet crashed into a cliff carrying 155 passengers.
- MM 10. I hardly ate any breakfast.
- MM 11. I watched the mechanic fix the car with admiration.
- MM 12. I earn fifty dollars a week scarcely.
- C 13. Reaching into the cupboard, I found the bag of cookies.
- MM 14. We borrowed a mower from a neighbor that was broken.
- MM 15. Climbing up the telephone pole, we saw a squirrel.
- C 16. Mel, running rapidly, disappeared around the bend.
- MM 17. The cat was rescued after the building had been set on fire by a fireman.
- MM 18. We've almost found all the pieces to the puzzle.
- MM 19. She vowed on her birthday to go on a diet.
- MM 20. We need gas badly.

### ANSWERS:

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. MM man (in the blue sweater)             | 11. MM (With admiration,) I watched |
| 2. MM saw (almost) the whole                | 12. MM earn (scarcely) fifty        |
| 3. MM (Running out the door,) Joe           | 13. C                               |
| 4. MM initials (carved on the tree) were    | 14. MM mower (that was broken)      |
| 5. C  | 15. MM (We saw a squirrel) climbing |
| 6. MM pill (every four hours.)              | 16. C                               |
| 7. C  | 17. MM rescued (by a fireman)       |
| 8. MM woman (wearing the feathered hat)     | 18. MM found (almost) all           |
| 9. MM jet crashed (carrying 155 passengers) | 19. MM vowed (to go on a diet)      |
| 10. MM ate (hardly) any                     | 20. MM We (badly) need              |

## DANGLING MODIFIERS WORKSHEET

Draw one line under the dangling modifier in each of the following sentences.

1. Driving in heavy traffic, my head started to ache.
2. Fishing for trout, our boat tipped over.
3. Crossing the border, my bags were searched.
4. Searching my wallet, my driver's license was found.
5. A shovel was used, building the sand castle.

ANSWERS:

1. Driving in heavy traffic, my head started to ache.
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Write "DM" if the modifier is dangling or "C" if it has a subject to refer to and the sentence is correct. Underline the subject.

- C 1. Chasing his sister, Billy fell and bruised his knee.
- DM 2. Feeling nervous, nails were bitten.
- C 3. Running scared, the cat climbed up the tree.
- DM 4. Laughing hysterically, the joke was repeated.
- C 5. Slipping on the ice, her leg was broken.

ANSWERS:

1. C      2. DM      3. C      4. DM      5. C

In all of the following sentences, there are modifiers that do not apply clearly to the word they modify. Underline the subject and rewrite the sentence, making the modifier apply clearly to the word it modifies. If there is no subject, supply an appropriate one. Please have a writing counselor check the remaining exercises.

1. Reaching the finals, the game was won by the Tigers.

\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Playing skillfully, a touchdown was made by the home team.

\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Raising his hand, the question was answered by Joe.

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Planting vegetables, her knees got dirty.

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. Speaking for the community, the issue was raised by Mrs. Santos.

\_\_\_\_\_.

**Correct the following sentences by changing the dangling modifier into a dependent clause. Rewrite the entire sentence in the space provided.**

1. Fooling around, the lamps got broken.

\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Dashing through the snow, a stone upset the sleigh.

\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Driving home, our car got a flat tire.

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Waiting for my friend, the weather turned bad.

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. Taking out the garbage, snow started to fall.

\_\_\_\_\_.

**Complete these sentences.**

1. Since moving to Nebraska, \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Before putting on a show, \_\_\_\_\_.

3. While waiting for the Sears man, \_\_\_\_\_.

4. By having the oil filter changed, \_\_\_\_\_.

5. On hearing about your divorce, \_\_\_\_\_.

**Complete these sentences.**

1. To appreciate the music, \_\_\_\_\_.

2. To get a raise, \_\_\_\_\_.

3. To have a successful barbecue, \_\_\_\_\_.

4. To get to know people, \_\_\_\_\_.

5. To understand the stock market, \_\_\_\_\_.