

MISPLACED & DANGLING MODIFIERS

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Be careful when using **modifiers**, especially **modifying phrases and clauses**. Keep these points in mind to be sure your use of **modifiers**, including **modifying phrases and clauses**, gives your readers the impression you aim to convey.

1. Always put a modifier as close as you can to the word the modifier describes.

Confusing	Clear
Mary got into the police car wearing a wrinkled skirt.	Wearing a wrinkled skirt, Mary got into the police car.
In the second sentence, it's clear <i>who</i> was wearing the wrinkled skirt.	

2. Make sure an introductory phrase refers to a specific word in the sentence.

Confusing	Clear
When the soup was served, the pot was scrubbed.	When the soup was served, the chef scrubbed to pot.
The second sentence tells readers <i>who</i> scrubbed the pot. This is easier when you avoid using the passive voice.	

3. Don't use a modifier to split a unified element of a sentence.

Confusing	Clear
Mother called, for a prescription, the doctor.	Mother called the doctor for a prescription.
Mother's calling the doctor isn't interrupted in the second sentence.	

4. Make every modifier clearly refer to one word.

Confusing	Clear
The girl who was riding the pony playfully laughed at the puppies.	The girl who was playfully riding the pony laughed at the puppies.
It's clear in the second sentence that she was <i>riding</i> playfully, rather than <i>laughing</i> playfully.	

5. Be certain readers can easily identify the subject of every sentence.

Confusing	Clear
Not knowing how to swim, John's pool is rarely used.	Because John doesn't know how to swim, his pool is rarely used.
The reason the pool is rarely used is clear in the second sentence.	

6. Put-one-word modifiers (almost, hardly, nearly, and only) *immediately* before the word modified.

Confusing	Clear
Mark almost drives 100 miles per hour.	Mark drives almost 100 miles per hour
Almost tells us <i>how</i> Mark does something, not <i>what</i> he does.	

To make sure your modifiers give your readers the right message, read your sentences aloud or share them with someone you trust!

Paraphrased for the Student Learning Center by Lowrie Osborne, October 2007 from

Pearson Longman Companion Website

The Allyn & Bacon Handbook Online

http://wps.ablongman.com/long_rosen_abh_5/0,4772,253074-,00.html

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LEARN MORE

Texts available to use in The SLC English Writing Lab:

<i>Grassroots with Readings</i> , Ninth Edition Susan Fawcett Chapter 18	<i>Evergreen, A Guide to Writing with Readings</i> , Ninth Edition, Susan Fawcett Chapter 34	<i>The Bedford Handbook</i> , Seventh Edition, Diana Hacker Chapter 12
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Online:

[Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers](#)

[LEO: Literacy Education Online](#)

[The best misplaced and dangling modifiers of all time](#)

[Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers](#)

[Dangling Modifiers](#)

[Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers](#)

[Think you understand dangling and misplaced modifiers?](#)

Don't forget: students can always ask tutors or their teachers for an explanation of anything that's not clear.

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PRACTICE

Rewrite these sentences to correct problem with misplaced and dangling modifiers.

1. Stuck in the tree, Marla called the fire department to rescue her cat.
2. Barry almost got to bed at midnight.
3. My husband brought the kids in his truck, smoking all the way.
4. Allergic to sunlight, the garden behind the mansion gets little use.
5. You only have to swim 100 yards.
6. Mother made sandwiches for all the kids with mayonnaise.
7. Ambling across the street, the sports car smashed the tortoise.
8. We spotted a falcon peering out the window.
9. Carlos can speak Spanish hardly.
10. The driveway is nearly paved to the garage.
11. Michael can't eat candy for Halloween with peanuts.
12. Patrick only wears green on St. Patrick's Day.
13. The Queen of England shows respect for everyone wearing her crown.
14. Shopping at Target, too much money is spent.
15. The doctor took care of me who went to the best medical school.
16. All the students loved the teacher who couldn't read.
17. Climbing up the steps two at a time, his grandfather couldn't catch Alex.
18. Lazlo needs to exercise badly.
19. We bought that lamp at an antique shop that cost \$400.
20. Jennifer only made Jell-o for the Christmas party.

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