

Modifiers

Misplaced Modifiers confuse the meaning of a sentence because of their incorrect placement. A descriptive word, phrase, or clause should be placed next to the word it modifies.

Incorrect: Walking on the wall, he killed a spider.

Correct: He killed a spider (that was) walking on the wall.

Incorrect: Accidentally killed by a chemical weed killer, the botanist grieved for his favorite plant.

Correct: The botanist grieved for his plant which was accidentally killed by a chemical weed killer.

Correct: The large waves chased the big ship which came from the north.

Different Meaning: The large waves which came from the north chased the big ship.

Dangling Modifiers confuse the meaning of a sentence because they have nothing to modify.

Remember the following:

- The noun (person, place, object or idea) that causes the action should be the subject of the main clause.
- The modifying phrase and the noun it modifies should make sense when used together.
- The modifying clause must be immediately before (and sometimes after) the noun it modifies.

Incorrect: Grading the tests, the pen ran out of ink. (The pen can't grade the tests).

Correct: Grading the tests, **the teacher** ran out of ink.

Incorrect: Listening to the jazz competition, the trumpet hit a false note.

Correct: Listening to the jazz competition, **Bill** heard the trumpet hit a false note.

Incorrect: After speeding through the stoplight, the police officer gave him a ticket.

Correct: After speeding through the stoplight, **the driver** was given a ticket by the police officer.

Practice Identifying Dangling Modifiers. Select the correct sentence.

1. ___ Walking to work at noon in July, my body began to sweat.
___ When I was walking to work at noon in July, I began to sweat.
2. ___ After drinking several beers, he could barely drive the car.
___ After drinking several beers, the car was barely driveable.
3. ___ Before buying a house, the process confuses most buyers.
___ Before buying a house, most buyers are confused.