

Modifier Placement: Avoiding Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Dangling Modifiers: A modifier that begins a sentence must be followed immediately by the word it is meant to describe. If it is not, the modifier is said to be *dangling*, and the sentence takes on an unintended meaning.

While smoking a pipe, my dog sat with me by the crackling fire.

Fix 1: *While smoking a pipe, I sat* with my dog by the crackling fire.

Fix 2: *While I smoked a pipe,* my dog sat with me by the crackling fire.

Swimming at the lake, a rock cut Ralph's foot.

Swimming at the lake, Ralph cut his foot on a rock.

When eating my sandwich, a swarm of gnats bit me.

When I was eating my sandwich, five gnats bit me.

Practice:

1. After putting on a warm jacket, the room didn't feel as cold.

2. Covered with food stains, my mother decided to wash the tablecloth.

3. Standing at the ocean, the brisk wind blew my hair.

4. Using binoculars, the hawk was seen following its prey.

5. Braking the car suddenly, my shopping bags tumbled off the seat.

Misplaced Modifier: A modifier that does not describe the word the writer intended it to describe. A misplaced modifier often obscures the meaning of a sentence. Place a modifier as close as possible to what it is intended to describe.

Ralph bought an old car from a crooked **dealer** *with a faulty transmission*.

Ralph bought an old **car** *with a faulty transmission* from a crooked dealer.

I *nearly* **earned** a hundred dollars yesterday.

I earned *nearly* a **hundred dollars** yesterday.

Ralph yelled at **his dog** *in his underwear*.

Ralph, *in his underwear*, yelled at Fritz.

Practice:

1. Shirley returned the hamburger to the grocery store that was spoiled.

2. Ralph killed the wasp that stung him with a shoe.

3. Shirley bought a necklace driving past the yard sale.

4. I noticed a hole in the wall walking into the gym.

5. Ralph saw a kangaroo at the window under the influence of pain medication.
