

MISPLACED MODIFIERS AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes another word, phrase, or clause in a sentence. When using a modifier, place it as close as possible to the subject or verb that it describes, which will usually mean placing the modifier immediately before or after the word, phrase, or clause it describes. If the modifier is too far away from the word, phrase, or clause it describes, it may appear to describe the wrong word, phrase, or clause and, thereby, create an unintended meaning. A modifier that describes the wrong word, phrase, or clause in a sentence is called a **misplaced modifier**. To fix a misplaced modifier, simply move it to the correct place in the sentence so it conveys your intended meaning.

Misplaced Adjectives

Rule: Simple adjectives precede that which they modify.

Incorrect: Mark found a **red** student's Property textbook in the hallway.

Correct: Mark found a student's **red** Property textbook in the hallway.

Incorrect: The barista poured my **iced** cup of coffee.

Correct: The barista poured my cup of **iced** coffee.

Misplaced Adjectival Phrases and Clauses

Rule: Adjectival phrases and clause follow that which they modify.

Incorrect: The doctor prescribed the medicine **with red hair**.

Correct: The doctor **with red hair** prescribed the medicine.

Incorrect: The student organization hosted a fundraiser to feed the homeless **that raised \$2,000**.

Correct: The student organization hosted a fundraiser **that raised \$2,000** to feed the homeless.

Misplaced Adverbs

Rule: Keep the adverb in front of the verb it modifies unless it modifies the entire clause.

Modifies both: Asif read the directions and assembled the shelves carefully.

Modifies "read": Asif carefully read the directions and assembled the shelves.

Modifies "assembled": Asif read the directions and carefully assembled the shelves.

Misplaced Prepositional Phrases

Incorrect: The plaintiff placed a suicide note that she drafted **into Reid's jacket pocket**.

Correct: The plaintiff placed **into Reid's jacket pocket** a suicide note that she drafted.

Incorrect: Offering examples allows your readers to follow your discussion even if they do not have the documents you are discussing **in front of them**.

Correct: Offering examples allows your readers to follow your discussion even if they do not have **in front of them** the documents you are discussing.

Dangling Modifiers

Dangling modifiers are missing the word they modify. They are most often found in introductory phrases that do not have a subject.

Incorrect: **To qualify for unemployment benefits, paperwork** must be filled out properly.

Correct: **To qualify for unemployment benefits, the applicant** must properly fill out the paperwork.

Incorrect: **After reading the article, the results** seem unconvincing.

Correct: **After reading the article, I find** the results unconvincing.

Squinting Modifiers (two-way modifiers)

Incorrect: Students who study **frequently** do well on their exams.

Correct: Students who **frequently** study do well on their exams.

Correct: Students who study will **frequently** do well on their exams.

Incorrect: Abena said **on Monday** she would drop off her car.

Correct: **On Monday**, Abena said she would drop off her car.

Correct: Abena said she would drop off her car **on Monday**.

Limiters (just, almost, hardly, nearly, simply, etc.)

Incorrect: The Pirates only scored one run in the fourth inning.

Correct: The Pirates scored only one run in the fourth inning.

Correct: The new Yeezys are **just** not stylish. (They do not have style)

Also Correct: The new Yeezys are not **just** stylish. (They are more than stylish)