

Misplaced & Dangling Modifiers

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English 10: Composition

What is a modifier?

In English grammar, a modifier is a **word**, **phrase**, or **clause** that adds **further context** or **additional detail** to a complete thought.

Misplaced Modifiers:

Words that do not describe the intended meaning due to awkward placement in a sentence. As a result, the intended subject is mistaken for another.

How to Correct Misplaced Modifiers:

Place (move) the modifier closer to the subject that it is trying to describe.

Misplaced:

The nefarious witch concocted a pernicious poison with a crooked nose.

Correct:

The nefarious witch with a crooked nose concocted a pernicious poison ~~with a crooked nose~~.

Misplaced:

Billy could not go to school in his small Sports car with a broken leg.

Correct:

Billy, with a broken leg, could not go to school in his small sports car ~~with a broken leg~~.

Dangling Modifiers:

A modifier at the beginning of a sentence that is not immediately followed by the subject that it intends to describe.

How to Correct Dangling Modifiers:

1. Follow a modifier at the start of a sentence with the intended subject.

Dangling:

At the age of three, my dad taught me how to sing the ABCs.

Correct:

At the age of three, I was taught by my dad how to sing the ABC's.

2. Alternatively, a dangling modifier can be repaired by inserting the subject into the modifier.

Dangling:

After failing the test, the teacher unleashed an angry rant towards the students.

Correct:

After the students failed the test, the teacher unleashed an angry rant towards them.

After they failed the test, the teacher unleashed an angry rant towards the students.

Misplaced & Dangling Modifiers Review

- A. Identify and underline the misplaced or dangling modifier.
- B. Correct the sentence using one of the rules from the notes.

1. While being restrained by court officials, the judge sentences the kidnappers.
While the kidnappers were being restrained by court officials, the judge sentenced them.
Dangling Modifier
2. Margaret Atwood wrote that someone was as innocent as a bathtub full of bullets in a poem.
Margaret Atwood wrote in a poem that someone was as innocent as a bathtub full of bullets.
Misplaced Modifier
3. The apprentice watched as the master carpenter expertly fit the door with attentive eyes.
The apprentice watched with attentive eyes as the master carpenter expertly fit the door.
Misplaced Modifier
4. On Monday morning, the students on the bus stared at the ceiling or read the newspaper with tired faces.
On Monday morning, the students, with tired faces, on the bus stared at the ceiling or read the newspaper.
Misplaced Modifier
5. Not having much sleep, my concentration during class was weak.
I did not have much sleep, so my concentration during class was weak.
Dangling Modifier
6. I almost filled an entire notebook with biology lab drawings.
I filled almost an entire notebook with biology lab drawings.
Misplaced Modifier
7. In a sentimental frame of mind, Adele's song brought tears to Beth's eyes.
While Beth was in a sentimental state of mind, Adele's song brought tears to her eyes.
Dangling Modifier
8. Walking by the lakeshore, a water snake brushed past my leg.
When I was walking by the lakeshore, a water snake brushed past my leg.
Dangling Modifier
9. The photographer pointed his camera at the deer equipped with a special night vision scope.
The photographer pointed his camera equipped with a special night vision scope, the, at the deer.
Misplaced Modifier
10. Joined at the hip, a team of surgeons successfully separated the conjoined twins.
Joined at the hip, the conjoined twins were separated successfully by a team of surgeons.
Dangling Modifier