

Grammar Misplaced & Dangling Modifiers

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes another word or group of words. The most frequent mistakes that occur with modifiers are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

A modifier that is placed too far away from the word it describes is called a **misplaced modifier**. Modifiers should be placed as close as possible to the word or words they describe in order to avoid confusion and ensure clarity. There are three simple steps to correct a misplaced modifier.

STEP 1: Find the modifier.

STEP 2: Identify what word the modifier was intended to modify.

STEP 3: Place the modifier as close as possible to the word, phrase, or clause it is supposed to describe.

INCORRECT: The store sold inflatable children's toys.

STEP 1: The modifier is *inflatable*.

STEP 2: The modifier, *inflatable*, is closest to the word *children*. Thus, the sentence reads as though the children are inflatable, instead of the toys.

STEP 3: In order to correct the misplaced modifier, *toys* and *inflatable* must be moved closer together.

CORRECT: The store sold inflatable toys for children.

DANGLING MODIFIERS

A **dangling modifier** is a modifier that lacks a word or group of words to modify. Usually, a dangling modifier is found near the beginning of the sentence and starts with either a *verb + ing* or a *to + verb* phrase. There are three simple steps to correct a dangling modifier:

STEP 1: Find the modifier.

STEP 2: Decide what word the modifier was intended to modify.

STEP 3: Revise the sentence. To correct a dangling modifier, you cannot simply rearrange the sentence. You must add the word that the dangling modifier describes.

INCORRECT: To win the race, great speed will be needed.

STEP 1: The modifier is *to win the race*.

STEP 2: The modifier, *to win the race*, is not describing anything.

STEP 3: To find the appropriate subject of the sentence, it is helpful to ask, "Who will need great speed to win the race?" or "What is the modifier referring to?"

CORRECT: To win the race, **I** will need great speed.