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What is an example of a misplaced modifier

Didn't find what you need? Search our website or email us. The Misplaced Modifier Misplaced and dangling modifiers are phrases that are not located properly in relation to the words they modify. Misplaced modifiers lead to illogical sentences that are difficult to follow. Misplaced A small book sat on the desk that Sarah had read. The modifier: "that Sarah had read" The Problem: This modifier is misplaced because it modifies the desk. It sounds as if Sarah had read the desk. Corrected: A small book that Sarah had read sat on the desk. The two common types of modifier grammar errors are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. 1. Misplaced Modifiers The example above is a misplaced modifier. Rewrite the sentence so that you place any modifiers as close as possible to the words, phrases, or clauses they modify. Misplaced The professor posted the notes for the students covered in class. The Problem: The modifier, "covered in class," appears to modify "the students." Because the students are not covered in class, this is a misplaced modifier. Rehabilitated: The professor posted the notes covered in class for the students. 2. Dangling Modifiers occur with -ing modifiers Modifiers dangle when they are not logically connected to the main part of the sentence. State the subject right after the dangling modifier, or Add the subject to the dangling phrase. Misplaced Walking through the park, the grass tickled my feet. The Problem: "Walking through the park" seems to modify the grass. However, the grass cannot walk through the park. Therefore, this is a misplaced modifier. Rehabilitated: The grass tickled my feet as I walked through the park.Walking through the park, I found that the grass tickled my feet. Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that add description to sentences. Typically, you will find a modifier right next to—either in front of or behind—the word it logically describes. Take the simple, one-word adjective blue. If we add it to the sentence below, where should it go? At a downtown dealership, Kara bought a truck from a salesman with a comb-over. Should we locate blue next to dealership? A blue downtown dealership? A blue Kara? A blue salesman? A blue comb-over? Of course not! Logic dictates that blue can describe only one word, truck, so we must place the modifier next to that word: At a downtown dealership, Kara bought a blue truck from a salesman with a comb-over. In a similar manner, multi-word phrases and clauses often go right next to the word they describe. Here are examples: Gazing out the window, Paul missed the homework assignment that Professor Zuromski wrote on the board. Gazing out the window is a participle phrase describing Paul, the noun that follows. Sam gobbled the sandwich, which was soggy with tomato slices, as he rushed to class. Which was soggy with tomato slices is an adjective clause describing sandwich, the noun before it. As the hurricane approached, we watched the tree branches waving in the strong breeze. Waving in the strong breeze is a participle phrase describing branches, the noun in front. Sometimes a writer places the modifier too far away from the word it should describe. Born in the confusion is a misplaced modifier, an error. Read these examples: Churning in the Atlantic Ocean, we anxiously watched the weather report for information about the hurricane. Churning in the Atlantic Ocean is a participle phrase. In this sentence, it is describing the pronoun we. How illogical! We cannot churn in an ocean! Raymond wore his one collared shirt to the job interview, which was unfortunately stained with yellow mustard. Which was unfortunately stained with yellow mustard is an adjective clause. In the sentence above, this clause is describing interview, the noun in front. But an interview cannot get stained with a condiment! Burnt to a crisp, Professor Jones ruined another bagel in the ancient toaster in his office. Burnt to a crisp is a participle phrase. In this sentence, the phrase is describing Professor Jones, the noun after it. A more logical candidate is the bagel later in the sentence. To fix the error, locate the modifier next to the appropriate word: We anxiously watched the weather report for information about the hurricane churning in the Atlantic Ocean. Raymond wore his one collared shirt, which was unfortunately stained with yellow mustard, to the job interview. In the ancient toaster in his office, Professor Jones burnt another bagel to a crisp. Identify modifiers. Learn how to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers. A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out what the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome. A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous. Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head that was too large. Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet that was too large on her head. Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning. Look at the following two examples: Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother they call Shadow. Correct: They bought a kitten they call Shadow. Correct: They bought a kitten for my brother. In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is Shadow. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is kitten. Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician with stomach pains. Correct: The patient with stomach pains was referred to the physician. The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains. Simple modifiers like only, almost, just, nearly, and barely often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place. Confusing: Tyler almost found fifty cents under the sofa cushions. Repaired: Tyler found almost fifty cents under the sofa cushions. How do you almost find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer. A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle. Incorrect: Riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by rapidly. Correct: As Jane was riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by rapidly. In the incorrect sentence, riding in the sports car is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader! Incorrect: Walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens. Correct: As Jonas was walking home at night, the trees looked like spooky aliens. Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was walking home at night. In the incorrect sentence walking home at night is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected. Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team. Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team. In the incorrect sentence, to win the spelling bee is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do! The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier: Look for an -ing modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase: Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (Painting is the -ing modifier.) Underline the first noun that follows it. Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier. After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence. Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen. Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand. Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader. There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers. See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers. Summary: This resource explains what a dangling modifier is and how to correct the problem. Contributors: Chris Berry, Karl Stolley Last Edited: 2013-01-07 12:05:23 A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence. A modifier describes, clarifies, or gives more detail about a concept. Having finished the assignment, Jill turned on the TV. "Having finished" states an action but does not name the doer of that action. In English sentences, the doer must be the subject of the main clause that follows. In this sentence, it is Jill. She seems logically to be the one doing the action ("having finished"), and this sentence therefore does not have a dangling modifier. The following sentence has an incorrect usage: Having finished the assignment, the TV was turned on. "Having finished" is a participle expressing action, but the doer is not the TV set (the subject of the main clause): TV sets don't finish assignments. Since the doer of the action expressed in the participle has not been clearly stated, the participial phrase is said to be a dangling modifier. Strategies for revising dangling modifiers: 1. Name the appropriate or logical doer of the action as the subject of the main clause: Having arrived late for practice, a written excuse was needed. Who arrived late? This sentence says that the written excuse arrived late. To revise, decide who actually arrived late. The possible revision might look like this: Having arrived late for practice, the team captain needed a written excuse. The main clause now names the person (the captain) who did the action in the modifying phrase (arrived late). 2. Change the phrase that dangles into a complete introductory clause by naming the doer of the action in that clause: Without knowing his name, it was difficult to introduce him. Who didn't know his name? To revise, decide who was trying to introduce him. The revision might look something like this: Because Maria did not know his name, it was difficult to introduce him. The phrase is now a complete introductory clause; it does not modify any other part of the sentence, so is not considered "dangling." 3. Combine the phrase and main clause into one: To improve his results, the experiment was done again. Who wanted to improve results? This sentence says that the experiment was trying to improve its own results. To revise, combine the phrase and the main clause into one sentence. The revision might look something like this: He improved his results by doing the experiment again. INCORRECT: After reading the original study, the article remains unconvincing. REVISED: After reading the original study, I find the article unconvincing. INCORRECT: Relieved of your responsibilities at your job, your home should be a place to relax. REVISED: Relieved of your responsibilities at your job, you should be able to relax at home. INCORRECT: The experiment was a failure, not having studied the lab manual carefully. REVISED: They failed the experiment, not having studied the lab manual carefully. A misplaced modifier is a modifier (adjective, adverb, phrase, clause) that is incorrectly placed in the sentence. Modifiers describe a word (or words in a sentence). It should be placed as closely as possible to the word it is meant to modify. For example: The man was pulled over for speeding in the blue sweater. In the above example, in the blue sweater is misplaced in the sentence. It should be close to man because it is meant to modify (or describe) man. Correct: The man in the blue sweater was pulled over for speeding. Do you know what a misplaced modifier is? Today's your day to learn about these guys! Before we delve into this fascinating topic, let's examine regular modifiers. Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that describe (modify) other words or groups of words. I love sandy beaches.I only drove to the beach. Sandy and only are modifiers. Sandy is an adjective modifying the noun beaches. Only is an adverb modifying the verb drove. I enjoyed the hot dog covered in mustard and relish. Covered in mustard and relish is a modifier. It is a participial phrase (adjective) modifying the noun hot dog. Misplaced Modifiers Modifiers are misplaced if they modify words that they are not intended to modify or if their placement conveys an unintended meaning.The only difference in the following two sentences is the placement of the modifier only, but these sentences have different meanings. 1. I drove only to the beach.2. I only drove to the beach. Sentence 1 This sentence is saying that I drove, and the beach was my one destination.Sentence 2This sentence is somewhat ambiguous. It could be saying that I drove to the beach, and that's all that I did. I didn't watch television or mow the lawn. It could also be saying that I didn't bike or walk to the beach. I only drove.Many people would use sentence 2 to convey the idea of sentence 1. But, if you want to eliminate any chance of misunderstanding, be sensitive about the placement of modifiers like only. Fixing Them The bad news is that misplaced modifiers can confuse your reader. The good news is that they can be very amusing. Let's look at two funny examples. We'll also be fixing them by rewording the sentence or moving the modifier so that it is close to the word that it is supposed to modify. Example 1 Covered in mustard and relish, I enjoyed the hot dog. --> NO Do you see how covered in mustard and relish is closest to I? (This sounds like some kind of avant-garde spa treatment!)We want to change it so that it is closest to the word that it modifies - hot dog. I enjoyed the hot dog covered in mustard and relish. --> YES Example 2 Spitting out hot lava, my friend took photos as the volcano erupted. --> NO Do you see how spitting out hot lava comes right before friend? (Yikes! Her mouth must hurt!) We need to change that. There are a number of ways to fix this sentence by rewording it. Here are two possibilities. The volcano began spitting out hot lava, and my friend took photos of it. --> YES As the volcano began spitting out hot lava, my friend took photos of it. --> YES It's Your Turn Can you fix the following misplaced modifiers? You'll find the answers at the bottom of the page. (Remember that there is usually more than one way to fix these.)1. Illuminated by candlelight, my mom admired the restaurant's decor. 2. Once used in every classroom, teachers are beginning to abandon blackboards.3. They said it will rain on the television. Sentence Diagramming Sometimes, diagramming misplaced modifiers can show us the different meanings that the sentence has. This diagram shows us that covered in mustard and relish is modifying the pronoun I. Covered in mustard and relish, I enjoyed the hot dog. This diagram shows us that covered in mustard and relish is modifying the noun hot dog. I enjoyed the hot dog covered in mustard and relish. Possible Answers 1. My mom admired the restaurant's decor, which was illuminated by candlelight.2. Teachers are beginning to abandon blackboards, which were once used in every classroom.3. On the television, they said it will rain.

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