



Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Modifier: a word or group of words describing or modifying the meaning of another word in the sentence.

Misplaced modifier: a modifier that is not close to the word it modifies, and as a result it modifies the wrong word.

Dangling modifier: a modifier that has no word in the sentence for it to modify. It is left “dangling” and consequently ends up modifying an unintended word.

Examples of misplaced modifiers:

1. For sale: Mixing bowl set designed to please a cook with round bottom for efficient beating.
2. Two cars reported stolen by the Riverside police yesterday.
3. The clerk handed the groceries to the customer in a paper bag.
4. Applications are being taken now for the two-year-old nursery workers.

Examples of dangling modifiers:

1. Arriving home after midnight, the house was dark.
2. Sound asleep, the alarm clock was not heard by Frank.

How to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers:

1. Place every modifier close to the word it modifies
2. If the word meant to be modified is not in the sentence, insert it close to the modifier.
3. Reword or punctuate the sentence so that the intended meaning is clear.

Examples of fixing misplaced or dangling modifiers:

Starting out as a short-order cook, the work can be confusing at first to a trainee.

Fixed sentence: Starting out as a short-order cook, a trainee can find the work confusing at first.

Two cars reported stolen by the Riverside police yesterday.

Fixed sentence: The Riverside police reported that two cars were stolen yesterday.

When courting Emily, the townspeople gossiped about her.

Fixed sentence: When Emily was being courted by Homer, the townspeople gossiped about her.

Applications are being taken now for the two-year-old nursery workers.

Fixed sentence: Applications are being taken now for workers in the nursery for two-year-olds.