

## 23

# Placement of Modifiers

## Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

### Diagnostic Preview


**HELP**

Sentences in Diagnostic Preview, Part A, may be correctly revised in more than one way.



Go to the Chapter Menu for an interactive activity.

#### A. Revising Sentences by Correcting Faulty Modifiers

The following sentences contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning is clear and correct.

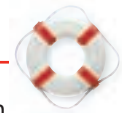
- EXAMPLE**
- We bought a gadget from a vendor at the flea market that was guaranteed to reduce gas consumption in our car by ten percent.
  - From a vendor at the flea market, we bought a gadget that was guaranteed to reduce gas consumption in our car by ten percent.*
- Preferring the mountains rather than the nearby seashore, the Adirondacks were chosen as our vacation spot.
  - After working in Washington, D.C., for more than twenty years, the methods of lobbyists were familiar.
  - This bank approves car loans to qualified individuals of any size.
  - Because they were untamed, the signs warned that the animals were dangerous.
  - One can see more than a hundred lakes flying at an altitude of several thousand feet.
  - Jack bought a book of shorthand lessons along with his new word processor, which he read and studied diligently.

7. The people in line only had to stand out in the cold for a few minutes.
8. We followed several routes that early Spanish explorers took on vacation last year.
9. Salvador said after the game the head referee had explained his unpopular decision to the two team captains.
10. Rounding a sharp curve on El Camino del Rio on the way to Big Bend, a detour sign warned of danger.

## B. Revising Sentences by Correcting Faulty Modifiers

The following sentences contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning is clear and correct.

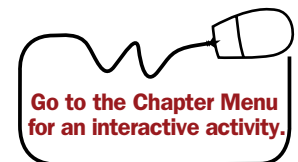
- EXAMPLE**
1. We saw Agatha Christie's play *The Mousetrap* last year in London, which has been running since 1952.
  1. *Last year in London, we saw Agatha Christie's play The Mousetrap, which has been running since 1952.*
11. Among popular mystery writers, the works of Agatha Christie continue to lead sales.
  12. Phoebe said during the summer Karl is planning to read all of Christie's books about the Belgian detective Hercule Poirot.
  13. Famous as the world's longest running play, audiences have enjoyed Christie's *The Mousetrap* for over forty years.
  14. Concluding the play, the audience is always told by the cast not to give away the surprise ending.
  15. After reading all of Christie's works, our library received a number of requests for books by another great mystery writer, Dorothy L. Sayers.
  16. When in junior high school, Mom bought me my first Sayers mystery novel.
  17. Named Lord Peter Wimsey, there are few criminal investigators who rival Sayers' amateur detective.
  18. After reading a detective story by Ngaio (pronounced Ny-o) Marsh, New Zealand became an interest of mine.
  19. Reading Marsh's *Died in the Wool* for the third time, it is still one of my favorites.
  20. Fond of mysteries, novels such as *Devices and Desires* by the British author P. D. James keep Ben spellbound.



### HELP

Sentences in Diagnostic Preview, Part B, may be correctly revised in more than one way.

Link to  Literature



## Misplaced Modifiers

A modifying word, phrase, or clause that seems to modify the wrong word or word group in a sentence is a *misplaced modifier*.

### 23a. Avoid using misplaced modifiers.

To correct a misplaced modifier, place the modifying word, phrase, or clause as close as possible to the word or words you intend to modify.

**MISPLACED** We plan to go to the antique auto show that we read about in the paper tomorrow. [Did we do the planning before reading the paper?]

**CLEAR** **Tomorrow**, we plan to go to the antique auto show that we read about in the paper.

**MISPLACED** I finished reading the book that Alice Walker wrote about Langston Hughes during spring break. [Did Alice Walker write the book about Langston Hughes during spring break?]

**CLEAR** **During spring break** I finished reading the book that Alice Walker wrote about Langston Hughes.

**MISPLACED** The thief tried to run away from the police officer abandoning the stolen car and dashing into the woods. [Was the police officer abandoning the stolen car and dashing into the woods?]

**CLEAR** **Abandoning the stolen car and dashing into the woods**, the thief tried to run away from the police officer.

**MISPLACED** Each actor needs to affect a British accent that auditions for the role of Professor Higgins. [Does a British accent audition for the role?]

**CLEAR** Each actor **that auditions for the role of Professor Higgins** needs to affect a British accent.

**MISPLACED** My nephew told me that he wanted to become an astronaut and fly to the moon when he was six years old. [Could my nephew become an astronaut at the age of six and fly to the moon?]

**CLEAR** **When he was six years old**, my nephew told me that he wanted to become an astronaut and fly to the moon.

## Squinting Modifiers

**23b. Avoid misplacing a modifying word, phrase, or clause so that it seems to modify either of two words.**

Such a misplaced modifier is often called a *squinting*, or *two-way*, modifier.

- MISPLACED Mary said during rehearsal Lori acted nervous. [Did Mary say this about Lori during rehearsal, or did Lori act nervous during rehearsal?]
- CLEAR **During rehearsal** Mary said Lori acted nervous.
- CLEAR Mary said Lori acted nervous **during rehearsal.**
- MISPLACED Tell Marco before he goes to his karate class I want to see him. [Do I want to see him before he goes, or do I want you to tell him before he goes?]
- CLEAR **Before he goes to his karate class**, tell Marco I want to see him.
- CLEAR Tell Marco I want to see him **before he goes to his karate class.**

### Exercise 1 Revising Sentences by Correcting Misplaced Modifiers

The following sentences contain misplaced modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning is clear and correct.

- EXAMPLE**
1. Recently vetoed by the president, Congress is amending the tax bill.
  1. *Congress is amending the tax bill recently vetoed by the president.*
1. Captain Andre Callioux was one of many heroic African American soldiers during the Civil War that fought in the Union Army.
  2. Rolling slowly down the alley, the bowler watched the straightest ball he had ever thrown.
  3. One of our observers sighted a plane through binoculars that she could not identify.
  4. The causeway has a drawbridge to permit the passage of large fishing boats from which all fishing is prohibited.
  5. Please tell Terry when he gets home from the mall Mom wants him to make dinner.
  6. At Tuesday's meeting, the mayor discussed the enormous cost of draining Buskill Swamp with city council members.
  7. According to the hieroglyphics, the mummy had nearly been buried for four thousand years.
  8. Li Hua inherited that antique fan from her great-aunt that has a mother-of-pearl handle.

#### STYLE TIP



Be sure to place modifiers correctly to show clearly the meaning you intend.

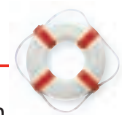
#### EXAMPLES

**Only** Mr. Reyes sees the essays. [Mr. Reyes, not anybody else, sees the essays.]

Mr. Reyes **only** sees the essays. [Mr. Reyes sees the essays; he does not mark them.]

Mr. Reyes sees **only** the essays. [Mr. Reyes does not see anything else.]

#### HELP



Sentences in Exercise 1 may be correctly revised in more than one way.

## STYLE

## TIP



A few dangling modifiers have become standard idiomatic expressions.

## EXAMPLES

**Considering the circumstances**, the pilot program is going well.

**Relatively speaking**, the cost of living has remained static for several years.

**To be perfectly frank**, the rate of inflation is still too high.

## Reference Note

For more about **modifying phrases and clauses**, see Chapter 16 and Chapter 17.

9. Ms. Steinberg, the explorer, described her trips through the jungle in our social studies class.
10. Uncle Jim said after reading all the consumer guides and asking his friends for advice he would decide what kind of personal computer to buy.

## Dangling Modifiers

A modifying word, phrase, or clause that does not clearly and sensibly modify any word or word group in a sentence is a *dangling modifier*.

### 23c. Avoid using dangling modifiers.

To correct a dangling modifier, add or replace words to make the meaning of the sentence clear.

DANGLING Foggy, we couldn't see eight feet in front of us. [*Were we foggy?*]

CORRECT **In the fog**, we couldn't see eight feet in front of us.

CORRECT We couldn't see eight feet in front of us **in the foggy weather**.

DANGLING After reading the article "Keeping America Beautiful," a recycling program was organized in their neighborhood. [*Who read the article?*]

CLEAR **After reading the article "Keeping America Beautiful," Luís and Gabrielle** organized a recycling program in their neighborhood.

CLEAR **After Luís and Gabrielle read the article "Keeping America Beautiful,"** they organized a recycling program in their neighborhood.

DANGLING To win the election, your support will be needed. [*Is your support trying to win the election?*]

CLEAR **To win the election, I** will need your support.

CLEAR **If I am to win the election,** your support will be needed.

DANGLING Convicted of stealing a loaf of bread for his sister's seven starving children, Jean Valjean's sentence was five years in prison. [*Was Jean Valjean's sentence convicted?*]

CLEAR **Convicted of stealing a loaf of bread for his sister's seven starving children, Jean Valjean** was sentenced to five years in prison.

CLEAR **Jean Valjean was convicted of stealing a loaf of bread for his sister's seven starving children** and was sentenced to five years in prison.

Possessive nouns and pronouns act as adjectives and therefore cannot be modified by adjectives. Adjective phrases and clauses that seem to modify possessive nouns or pronouns are considered dangling modifiers. The most common way to correct such dangling modifiers is to reword the sentence to avoid using the possessive form.

- DANGLING** Having chopped off the Green Knight's head, Gawain's part of the bargain must be fulfilled.
- CLEAR** Having chopped off the Green Knight's head, **Gawain** must fulfill his part of the bargain.
- DANGLING** Washing them repeatedly, Lady Macbeth's hands still appear bloody.
- CLEAR** Washing her hands repeatedly, **Lady Macbeth** still sees blood on them.

## Exercise 2 Revising Sentences by Correcting Dangling Modifiers

The following sentences contain dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning is clear and correct.

- EXAMPLE**
- Before moving to San Angelo, Miami had been their home.
    - Before they moved to San Angelo, Miami had been their home.*
  - Listening to his grandfather's stories, it was amazing to learn that several of their ancestors had worked with the Underground Railroad.
  - Architecturally striking, everyone is quite impressed by the new building's size and elegance.
  - When selecting a college, a number of factors should be carefully considered.
  - While talking with some friends of mine, the topic of careers in dentistry came up.
  - After searching all over the bookstore, Amy Tan's novel was found in the "Bestseller" section.
  - When using a word processor, the spellchecker should not be relied on to proofread.
  - After working in the fields all day, little energy was left for social activities.
  - To understand many of the allusions in modern literature, Greek and Roman mythology is essential.



### STYLE TIP

A dangling modifier often occurs when a sentence is in the passive voice. Rewriting sentences in the active voice not only eliminates many dangling modifiers but also makes your writing more interesting and lively.

#### PASSIVE VOICE

Having just waxed the car, a trip to the fair was planned. [*Having just waxed the car is a dangling modifier.*]

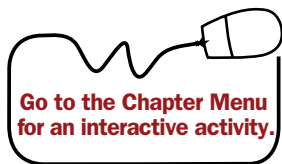
#### ACTIVE VOICE

Having just waxed the car, I planned a trip to the fair. [*Having just waxed the car modifies I.*]

#### Reference Note

For more about **active voice** and **passive voice**, see page 705.

9. Thirsty and weary, the oasis was a welcome sight.
10. Riding in the glass-bottomed boat, hundreds of beautiful tropical fish could be seen.



### Review A Revising Sentences by Correcting Faulty Modifiers

The following sentences contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning is clear and correct.

- EXAMPLES**
1. Candace told me at the conference Leora gave a very interesting presentation about solar eclipses.
    1. *At the conference, Candace told me Leora gave a very interesting presentation about solar eclipses.*
    - or
    1. *Candace told me Leora gave a very interesting presentation about solar eclipses at the conference.*
  2. After hiking across the South Downs from Eastbourne to Brighton, Jim's boots were battered and scratched.
    2. *After Jim hiked across the South Downs from Eastbourne to Brighton, his boots were battered and scratched.*
1. Having left the box cutter in the drawer under the front counter, the boxes of new science fiction and fantasy books in the back room were difficult for the librarian to open.
  2. Elected to serve the people of her state in Congress for the next two years, the new representative's term began with a difficult vote about taxes.
  3. To get his students ready for the coming semester, the Latin teacher asked his class to read the versions of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* translated by Robert Fagles over Christmas break.
  4. Aiming the giant radio telescope at the distant star in the constellation of Cassiopeia, the astronomer's hope was that it would quickly detect signs of extraterrestrial intelligence.
  5. He wanted to see the scary new film that was advertised on television and in the newspaper before anybody else saw it.
  6. Aunt Alice told us after talking to a friend who knew quite a bit about automobiles and trucks she had decided to buy a new car with air conditioning, automatic transmission, and a sun roof.
  7. To enjoy ancient Chinese poetry, even in translation, an understanding of Chinese history and of the poetic tradition in China is helpful.

8. The university's planetological survey team discovered a large asteroid with the enormous new reflecting telescope in the Andes that no one had ever catalogued or even seen before.
9. The champion bicyclist in the Tour de France tried to break away from the other bicyclists pedaling harder and faster than anyone else.
10. Having hidden the silver, Nostromo's reputation was made as the man who rescued the country from the rebels.

### Review B **Revising Sentences by Correcting Faulty Modifiers**

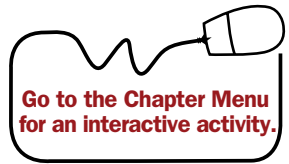
The sentences in the following paragraph contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning is clear and correct.

- EXAMPLE** [1] Using the map shown on the next page, it is easy to identify the homelands of many American Indians.
1. *Using the map shown on the next page, a person can easily identify the homelands of many American Indians.*

[1] I found a fascinating book at the library book sale that includes a map showing where American Indians traditionally lived.  
 [2] You can see the homelands of the major Plains peoples looking



The Granger Collection,  
New York



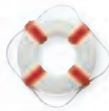


at the map. [3] The size of the Great Plains especially surprised me, extending farther north and south than I had thought. [4] While thumbing through the book, a picture of a Sioux encampment caught my attention. [5] Living much of the year in villages, farming was the main activity of most of these peoples. [6] However, I read during the summer they hunted buffalo. [7] Hunting for survival instead of sport, fewer buffalo were killed by them than were killed by European settlers. [8] Characterized by a strong sense of independence, a form of democracy was practiced by the Plains peoples. [9] To make key decisions, votes were cast at council meetings. [10] I'm going to find out more about such peoples as the Crow and Cheyenne, having read this fascinating book about the peoples of the Plains.

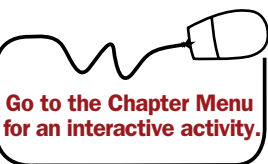
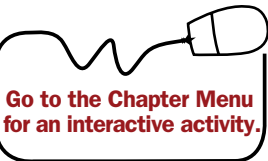


## 23

## Chapter Review

**HELP**

Sentences in the Chapter Review may be correctly revised in more than one way.



### A. Revising Sentences by Correcting Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

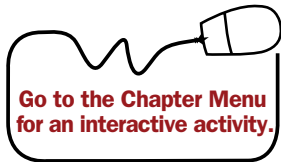
The following sentences contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning will be clear on first reading.

1. The Kovaks gave a toy robot to one of their children with a square glass head and flashing red eyes.
2. Pounding the piano keys with all her might, the chords of the prelude resounded through the concert hall.
3. We saw a herd of sheep on the way to our hotel in Wales.
4. To succeed in college, a great deal of time must be spent studying.
5. Dipped in yogurt, many people love fresh strawberries.
6. When only five years old, Dad took me camping on the Fort Apache Reservation in Arizona.
7. While trying to get ready for school, the doorbell rang suddenly.
8. Elaine told Joanne after the first act the drama gets more exciting.
9. By putting money aside regularly, a small savings account will grow steadily larger.
10. A tarantula bit one of the dockworkers that had a hairy, huge body as big as a man's hand.

### B. Revising Sentences by Correcting Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

The following sentences contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning will be clear on first reading.

11. Jody said on Saturday Fred should go to the classic car show.
12. Seeing a red 1928 Hispano-Suiza motorcar, his family's minivan seemed bulky and drab to Rick.
13. The Volkswagen Beetle remains one of the world's most popular cars first made in Germany in 1938.
14. Captivated by the Italian sports cars, the 1938 Alfa Romeo impressed Mark.
15. Mr. Reynolds showed a Model T Ford to his daughter that came off the assembly line in 1924.



16. Would you please tell Thelma after lunch Mary plans to watch the documentary about the history of U.S. motorcars?
17. To keep a classic car in excellent condition, much money and patience often are needed.
18. I got a chance to ride in a 1914 Rolls-Royce Continental that the Arnolds had restored during the parade.
19. After writing a report about classic luxury motorcars, the 1940 Packard and 1938 Lagonda De Ville were of special interest to me.
20. Looking at the various exhibits, it is easy to see why very early cars were called horseless carriages.

### C. Revising Sentences by Correcting Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

The following sentences contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence so that its meaning will be clear on first reading.

21. Jorie wrote a report about the Battle of Gettysburg during Christmas vacation.
22. Mom said after dinner my brother and I should wash the dishes.
23. Repeating the chorus an octave higher, the song was performed brilliantly.
24. Jim told Mimi during the holidays they would go to the ice-skating show.
25. Every player needs to prove her ability to the coach who wants to make the team.
26. With her clearly defined stripes, Jo thinks her cat's coloring is prettier than that of her friend's cat.
27. Having learned to heel, fetch, and sit, the dog's training was done.
28. After seeing the film, an argument nearly broke out between Ernesto and Claudia about what the message was.
29. Before Thanksgiving dinner, Alejandro discussed the proper method of stuffing a turkey with his mother.
30. Anxious about this morning's history test, thoughts raced through my head, and sleep did not come easily.
31. Remember to tell the equipment manager before the game the coach wants to see him.

32. Blowing steadily off the ocean, we had a difficult time walking into the wind.
33. Having learned the facts about Dutch elm disease, a program to save the trees was formulated by the members of the neighborhood association.
34. Professor Dellamorte said throughout class some students were not taking notes.
35. Whistling through the trees and between the buildings, the wind's force scattered loose trash in the street.



## Writing Application

### Using Modifiers in a News Report

**Correct Placement of Modifiers** Scientists have just discovered an entirely new life form in the Florida Everglades. You have been assigned the job of reporting the news to the public. You will need to describe not only the new creature but also the environment in which it was found and the methods used to find it.

**Prewriting** First, you will need to decide what your creature is and what made it so difficult to discover for so long. Then, you will need to decide the conditions in which your creature lives. Finally, decide how the scientists made the discovery. You may wish to research recent discoveries to find out how actual scientists work.

**Writing** Begin with a brief paragraph describing the new creature. Explain what makes this creature so different from previously known species. Then, give the details about how and where the creature lives and how it was discovered. You will need to use vivid modifiers to attract and keep your readers' attention.

**Revising** Evaluate the written version of your article for believability and clarity. Remember that this information is entirely new and potentially confusing, so you will need to make sure your modifiers are placed carefully.

**Publishing** Proofread your work for errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You and your classmates may want to collect the fictional news reports in a booklet about recent discoveries. Add illustrations of the different creatures you have described. Work together to write an introduction explaining the nature of the scientific discovery.