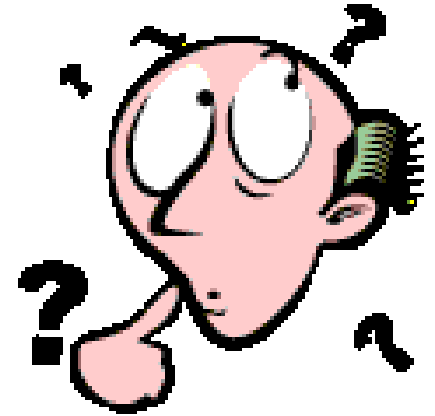


Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers: A Review

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What Is A Misplaced Modifier?

- ❑ A **modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that describes or changes the meaning of another word, phrase or clause in some way.
- ❑ A **misplaced modifier** means that there is a separation of space between the word, phrase, or clause and the modifier.
- ❑ When a modifier is misplaced, your meaning gets really fuzzy.

Let's Look At These for the Real Meaning....

- On her way to work, Elaine saw the *silver woman's earring* laying on the park bench.
 - This sentence implies that there is a *silver woman* who left her earring on the park bench, not that the earring itself is silver.
- On her way to work, Elaine saw the *woman's silver earring* laying on the park bench.
 - Now the earring is silver instead of the woman.

Watch Those Adverbs!

- Placement of adverbs (many words that end in –ly are adverbs) can change meanings to funny things.
- We drove off in the car we had just bought quickly.
 - Did we *buy* the car quickly, or did we *drive* the car quickly?
- We quickly drove off in the car we had just bought.
 - Okay! We must have made a great deal and were afraid the dealership would change its mind!
- Other adverbs that don't end in –ly to watch:
 - Only, just, almost.

What Was Stolen?

- The *stolen man's wallet* was placed on the police department's counter.
 - Was the man stolen, or was the wallet stolen?
- The *man's stolen wallet* was placed on the police department's counter.
 - Oh.... So the *wallet* was stolen and not the *man*!

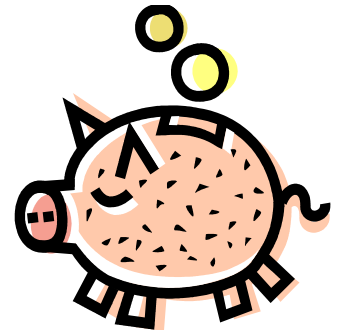


Troublesome Words That Indicate Number....

- ❑ Almost and nearly mean *close to* – nouns can be counted; verbs cannot be counted, so these words should be next to the **noun**.
- ❑ He *nearly swam* for an hour.
 - How can somebody *nearly swim*? Is he in the water, or is he on dry land?
- ❑ He *swam for nearly* an hour.
- ❑ It *almost cost* me \$800 for my car insurance.
 - Do you have any car insurance? If it *almost cost* you, did you actually get the policy, or did you find a cheaper one someplace else?
- ❑ It *cost me almost* \$800 for my car insurance.

Don't Forget *Merely* and *Only*!

- Joey *only* gave his mother \$50.00 towards the rent.
 - Joey was the only one who gave anything.
- Joey gave his mother *only* \$50.00 toward the rent.
 - Shouldn't Joey be helping out more?
 - The same thing happens to these sentences if we replace the word *only* with *merely*.



“Just” is Just a Pain In the Neck!

- Placing the word *just* in different places can change your meaning completely:
 - *Just Evan* was rushed to the hospital from the accident scene to treat his wounds on his neck.
 - Evan was the only one injured in the accident.
 - Evan was *just rushed* to the hospital from the accident scene to treat his wounds on his neck.
 - Evan’s ambulance *just* got there!
 - Evan was rushed to the hospital from the accident scene to treat *just his wounds* on his neck.
 - Evan has wounds and contusions all over, but only the ones on his neck are really serious.

Let's Try It... Fix These!

1. I nearly made \$100.00 today.
2. When we opened the leather woman's purse, we found the missing keys.
3. The job scarcely took an hour to complete.
4. I only have five minutes to talk with you.
5. The striking Honda's paint job made everyone gasp.

Source: <http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleDanglingEx1.htm>



And the Correct Answers Are....

1. I *made nearly* \$100.00 today.
2. When we opened the *woman's leather* purse, we found the missing keys.
3. The job *took scarcely* an hour to complete.
4. I *have only* five minutes to talk with you.
5. The *Honda's striking* paint job made everyone gasp.

Misplaced Prepositional Phrases

- ❑ When you place a prepositional phrase in the wrong place, all sorts of funny things can happen. Be careful!
- ❑ Christine made the brownies for her aunt *with chocolate icing*.
 - What is a woman doing running around covered in chocolate icing?
- ❑ Christine made brownies *with chocolate icing* for her aunt.

Watch Out For Verbals!

Verbals are verbs that end in –ing or that have the word “to” before them.

- Laila and Rachel talked about dancing in the kitchen *making grilled tuna*.
 - I wish **my** kitchen could make grilled tuna!
- Laila and Rachel, making grilled tuna, talked about dancing in the kitchen.
 - I guess Rachel Ray had Laila Ali as a guest.
- Drew and Alex drew pictures for Mom to show.
 - Is Mom showing the pictures, or are they showing the pictures to Mom?
- Drew and Alex drew pictures to show to Mom.
 - That makes more sense, doesn't it? Or is Mom a braggart?

And Don't Forget Those Clumsy Clauses!

- Make sure that clauses modify (describe) the noun you want them to modify.
- The mechanic drove out the car to Joe *that was lubricated*.
 - Was Joe just at the bar?
- The mechanic drove out the car *that was lubricated to Joe*.

Another Example:

- Next to the lamp, Dawn piled the books *that she turned on*.
 - Are these audio books? How did Dawn turn on a book?
- Dawn piled the books next to the lamp *that she had turned on*.



Don't Play "Monkey in the Middle!"

- ❑ When you move the phrase or clause that was a problem, don't plop it in between two nouns!
- ❑ The teacher said *on Monday* she would return our essays.
 - Did the teacher tell the class on Monday, or did she promise them for Monday?
- ❑ The teacher said she would return our essays *on Monday*.
- ❑ Or – *On Monday*, the teacher said she would return our essays.



Let's Practice Again!

1. The fans stood in line to buy tickets for the show for twenty minutes.
2. Marian read a chilling article in *The New York Times* about the effects of mercury poisoning.
3. The salesman sold the picture to that woman in the silver frame.
4. We gave the old clothes to a local charity that had been piled up in the basement.
5. The grass that was covered by the snow was creating a lush carpet of green.
6. The terrified patient spoke to the doctor with a terminal disease.
7. The student pleaded with the instructor who cheated on the test.

Source: <http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleDanglingEx3.htm>

<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleDanglingEx2.htm>

And The Answers Are...

1. The fans stood in line *for twenty minutes* to buy tickets for the show.
2. ***In The New York Times***, Marian read a chilling article about the effects of mercury poisoning.
3. The salesman sold the picture *in the silver frame* to that woman.
4. We gave the old clothes *that had been piled up in the basement* to a local charity.
5. The grass that was *creating a lush carpet of green* was covered by the snow.
6. The terrified patient *with a terminal disease* spoke to the doctor.
7. The student *who cheated on the test* pleaded with the instructor.



Dangling Modifiers

- Live things and machines do actions – if there is an action verb in your sentence, there must also be a living thing or a machine that does the action.
- Whenever you have dangling modifier, you must add words to the sentence. Simply rearranging the sentence will **not** fix the problem.

Examples of Dangling Modifiers

- Staring out over the ocean, the hurricane force winds were daunting.
 - The hurricane is not alive, and it is not a machine. It cannot stare anywhere. Add a person.
- Staring out over the ocean, *Matt saw* the daunting hurricane force winds.
- When in third grade, my mother went back to college.
 - This is a matter of logic – my mother could not have gone back to college in 3rd grade.
- When *I was* in third grade, my mother went back to college.

Fixing Dangling Modifiers

- Change the main part of the sentence so it **begins** with the term **actually modified**.
 - This change will put the modifier **next to** the term it modifies.
- **Looking toward the west**, a funnel shaped cloud stirred up dust. (Incorrect)
- **Looking toward the west**, *I saw* a funnel shaped cloud stir up dust. (Correct)
- **Walking to the movies**, the cloudburst drenched Jim. (Incorrect)
- **Walking to the movies**, *Jim was drenched* by the cloudburst. (Correct).

Another Way to Fix Dangling Modifiers

- Change the dangling modifier phrase to a subordinate clause, creating a subject and verb.
 - Leave the rest of the sentence as it is.
- **When nine years old**, my father enrolled in medical school. (Incorrect)
- **When *I was* nine years old**, my father enrolled in medical school. (Correct)
- **Having been fixed the night before**, Priscilla could use the car. (Incorrect)
- **Since *the car had been* fixed the night before**, Priscilla could use it. (Correct)

Source: <http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleDangling.htm>

Let's Fix Dangling Modifiers

1. Leaving quickly, my car lights were left on.
2. After explaining that I had lost my wallet, the waiter allowed me to pay by check.
3. To complete a degree in anthropology, at least two history courses must be taken.
4. Once filled with ink, Gina can write for hours before the pen runs dry.
5. In selecting her next car, cost was determined by Linda's paycheck.

<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleDanglingEx4.htm>

<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleDanglingEx5.htm>

And The Answers Are...

1. Leaving quickly, *I left* my car lights on.
2. After *I explained* that I had lost my wallet, the waiter allowed me to pay by check.
3. To complete a degree in anthropology, *a student must take* at least two history courses.
4. Once *the pen is* filled with ink, Gina can write for hours before the pen runs dry.
5. In selecting her next car, *Linda determined the cost by her paycheck*.

Main Source:

- <http://wwwnew.towson.edu/ows/moduleDangling.htm#%20Misplaced%20phrases>
- This website has lots of great self-teaching units for different grammar issues, including:
 - Verbs
 - Conjunctions
 - Pronoun Case
 - Commas
 - Commonly Confused Words