



Study Island 7.4 Pathways

Study Island *Study Guide*

Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

MISPLACED MODIFIER: THE BEAR



Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

A **modifier** describes, clarifies, gives more detail, and adds to or sets limits on a certain word or word group. It is important to place modifiers in their proper place within sentences in order to avoid confusion about who or what is being modified.

Misplaced Modifier

A **misplaced modifier** doesn't modify the word it is trying to modify, and this can confuse the reader.

example:

When I was at the market yesterday, I only browsed the movies.

Because of the word *only*, this sentence can be read three different ways:

1. Did you only look at the movies and not buy any?
2. Did you only look at the movies and nothing else?
3. Were you the only one who looked at the movies?

The way to clear this up is to move the placement of the word *only* so that it looks like this:

When I was at the market yesterday, I browsed only the movies.

Now, the sentence means you looked at the movies and nothing else, and it is clearer to you and your readers.

Dangling Modifier

Another example of a problem with modifiers is the **dangling modifier**. When you start a sentence with a dangling modifier that doesn't state the person, thing, or idea being modified, your readers will think that the modifier is meant for the subject of the clause that follows the modifying phrase.

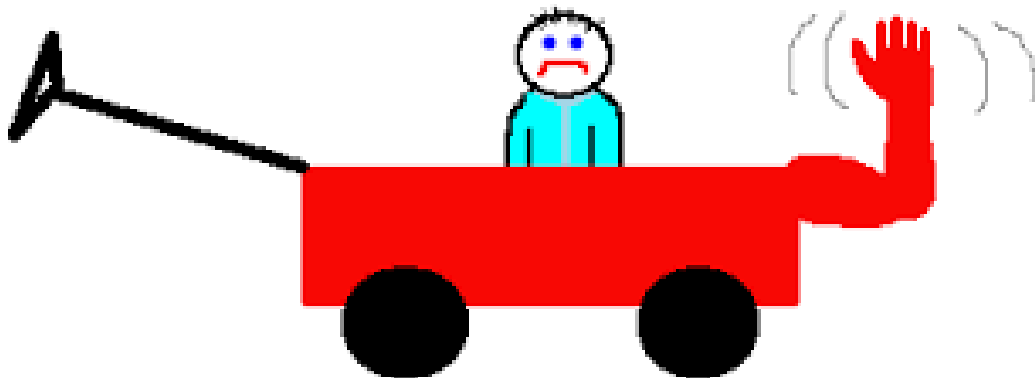
example:

Rushing to get home before the rain started, her car almost ran over a dog.

The sentence seems correct, but the car can't actually hit anything without the driver who drives it. A better way to state the sentence would be like this:

Rushing to get home before the rain started, she almost ran over a dog with her car.

While waving, the wagon sped away with the baby.



Waiting for the bus, the time went by slowly.

Dangling/Misplaced Modifiers

Definition:

A modifier, or modifying phrase, is a word or phrase that explains or describes a word. Dangling/misplaced modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that do not point clearly to the word or words they modify.

A cop just knocked on my door and told me my dogs were chasing people on bikes. I told him, "That's impossible. My dogs don't even own bikes."



Dangling Modifiers Raise the Dead



After returning from the dead, my sister took the plants outside.

Directions: Read the sentence below. Then decide whether or not it contains a misplaced or dangling modifier.

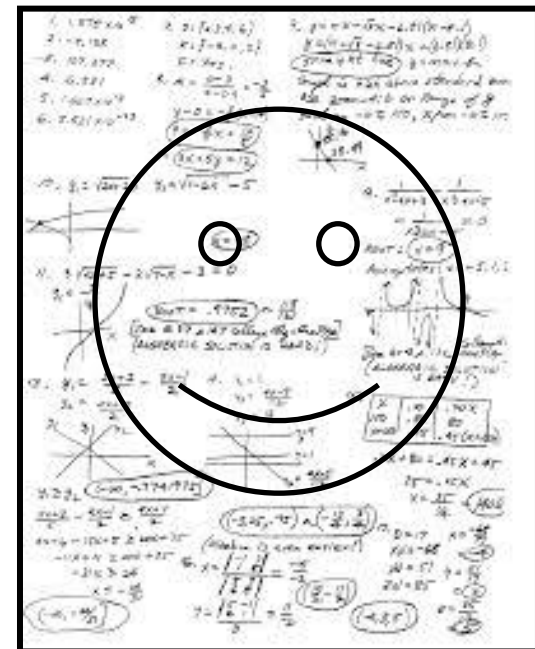
You might want to consult the rules before you make your choice!

Emma Sue was delighted when Mr. Nguyen returned her perfect calculus test with an ear-to-ear grin.

A. Yes! This sentence has a misplaced or dangling modifier!

B. No! This sentence is error free!

Wait... the calculus test has an ear-to-ear grin??



Emma Sue was delighted when Mr. Nguyen returned her perfect calculus test with an ear-to-ear grin.

Very impressive! You recognized that too many words separate the modifier from its target. ***With an ear-to-ear grin***, a **prepositional phrase**, is describing ***test*** when its target should be ***Mr. Nguyen***.

To fix the problem, you should organize the sentence like this: ***With an ear-to-ear grin, Mr. Nguyen returned the perfect calculus test, which delighted Emma Sue.***

Directions: Read the sentence below. Then decide whether or not it contains a misplaced or dangling modifier.

You might want to consult the rules before you make your choice!

Scrubbing the tile grout with bleach and an old toothbrush, the mildew stains began to fade.

A. Yes! This sentence has a misplaced or dangling modifier!

B. No! This sentence is error free!

Wait... the MILDEW STAINS are scrubbing the tile with an old toothbrush??



Scrubbing the tile grout with bleach and an old toothbrush, the mildew stains began to fade.

Good choice! You recognized that the modifier is dangling. ***Scrubbing the tile grout with bleach and an old toothbrush***, a participle phrase, has no target in the sentence to describe.

To fix the problem, you should revise the sentence like this: ***As Michael scrubbed the tile grout with bleach and an old toothbrush, the mildew stains began to fade***. Adding ***Michael*** to the sentence lets the reader know who is scrubbing the tile grout.