

## Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

A dangling modifier makes the meaning of a sentence absurd because the modifier either seems to modify a word which it cannot sensibly modify or is left without any word to modify at all. **To correct a dangling modifier, you should either rearrange the words in the sentence or add words to make the meaning logical and clear.**

WRONG While flying over Vicksburg, the national military park came into view.

RIGHT While flying over Vicksburg, we could see the national military park.

RIGHT While we were flying over Vicksburg, the national military park came into view.

WRONG Hopelessly baffled by the problem, our teacher was asked for the right answer.

RIGHT Hopelessly baffled by the problem, we asked our teacher for the right answer.

RIGHT Since we were hopelessly baffled by the problem, our teacher told us the answer.

EXERCISE: Eliminate the dangling modifiers in the following sentences by rewriting each sentence so that each modifier clearly and sensibly modifies a word in the sentence. You will have to supply the words.

1. Just after eating my lunch, the telephone rang.
2. When putting on lipstick, a mirror is needed.
3. Strolling through the French Quarter, the cafes particularly impressed me.
4. Being very hungry, this sandwich looks as good as fried chicken to me.
5. When shaving, Mother often tells Dad about her plans for the day.

Like dangling modifiers, misplaced modifiers can also damage the clear expression of ideas.

**Modifying phrases and clauses should be placed as near as possible to the words they modify.**

Misplaced Phrase Modifiers. Place a phrase modifier as near as possible to the word it modifies.

WRONG Louise yearned to see the Mississippi River while in Arizona.

(This incorrectly modified sentence places the Mississippi River in Arizona.)

RIGHT While in Arizona, Louise yearned to see the Mississippi River.

(Correctly modified, the sentence now places Louise, not the Mississippi River, in Arizona.)

Misplaced Clause Modifiers. Place a clause modifier as near as possible to the word it modifies.

WRONG The dress is hanging on the clothesline that I have sewed on for weeks.

RIGHT The dress that I have sewed on for weeks is hanging on the clothesline.

WRONG There is a park beyond the city dump which is very beautiful.

RIGHT Beyond the city dump is a park which is very beautiful.

RIGHT There is a beautiful park beyond the city dump.

WRONG The convict quietly listened to the words of the judge, who was to spend the rest of his life behind bars.

RIGHT The convict, who was to spend the rest of his life behind bars, quietly listened to the words of the judge.