

## FREE MODIFIERS

Free modifiers are used to add descriptive detail to sentences. They can be identified by these characteristics:

1. They are not necessary to make the sentence complete.
2. They can be located anywhere in a sentence, beginning, middle, or end.
3. They are punctuated with commas.
4. They are identified by the first word in the phrase.

Types of free modifiers:

1. Noun phrase= a noun + its modifiers (known also as an appositive) This phrase renames or further identifies the noun it is near.

Ex. *The JCCC Writing Center, a popular place to work on papers, is very busy today.*

2. Adjective phrase=adjectives that emphasize a noun in the sentence, unlike bound adjectives which do not dominate. To be free modifiers these adjectives must be near the noun they describe, but they also must be set off with commas to give them emphasis.

Ex. **Bound** – *The strangely pathetic man slipped away into the night.* (no commas)  
**Free**- *Strangely pathetic, the man slipped away into the night.* (commas)

3. Prepositional phrase=a preposition + a noun and its modifiers. These phrases may also be bound or free. Commas are necessary for free modifying prepositional phrases. Long introductory prepositional phrases need a comma and prepositional phrases that require emphasis need commas. A knowledge of prepositions is helpful.

Ex. **(free)***In spite of the impending danger, the crowd continued to stand in awe of the burning building.***(bound)**

4. Absolute phrases=a noun immediately followed by any type of free modifier. This phrase adds detail and variety to sentence structure. It also helps to eliminate auxiliary verbs.

Ex. *His eyes searching the crowd, the policeman began to consider who might have shot his partner.* (noun + verbal phrase)

*A scarf on her head, the young girl braced herself against the windy day.* (noun + prepositional phrase)

5. Adverb phrase=Adverbs that emphasize the verb in the sentence unlike bound adverbs which do not dominate the sentence. Like adjectives they must be near the word(s) they modify, and to be free they must be punctuated with commas.

Ex. **(free)** Quietly and cautiously, the midnight black cat leaped on the lady's dresser completely **(bound)** covered with bottles and jars.

6. Verb phrase= Present participle, past participle, or infinitive + modifiers or a noun. Commas are necessary for these free modifiers which usually give further detail or emphasis to a noun in the sentence.

Ex. Running as fast as his legs would go, the small boy hurried home.

The beautiful girl, fascinated by her admirer, missed her bus home.

To prove a point, the scientist poured the creamy liquid into the large mixing bowl.