

CHAPTER 19: PLACEMENT OF MODIFIERS

DANGLING MODIFIERS

A modifying phrase or clause that does not sensibly modify any word or words in a sentence is called a *dangling modifier*.

19c Avoid using a dangling modifier.

You may correct a dangling modifier in one of two ways.

- (1) Add a word or words that the phrase or clause can sensibly modify.
- (2) Add a word or words to the phrase or clause itself.

DANGLING Handing out papers, the teacher's pencil slipped from her hand.
[Whose hand was it?]


CLEAR **Handing out papers,** the teacher let her pencil slip from her hand.

DANGLING After climbing to the mountaintop, it was too cloudy to see very far. [Who was climbing?]

CLEAR **After climbing to the mountaintop,** we found that the weather was too cloudy to allow us to see very far.


DANGLING While working at the shop, news arrived of his brother's wedding. [Was the news working at the shop?]

CLEAR **While Alejandro was working at the shop,** news arrived of his brother's wedding.

 **NOTE** A few dangling modifiers have become standard in idiomatic expressions.

EXAMPLES **Generally speaking,** it doesn't snow here until mid-to-late February.

To be perfectly frank, the speech was quite dull.

 **REFERENCE NOTE:** For more information about using commas after introductory words, phrases, and clauses, see page 291.

EXERCISE 2 Revising Sentences by Correcting Dangling Modifiers

On your own paper, revise each sentence to eliminate the dangling modifier.

- EX. 1. After four days of camping, the home-cooked meal tasted great.
1. ~~After four days of camping,~~ the boys thought the home-cooked meal tasted great.
1. Having purchased fishing equipment, a trip to the lake was taken.
2. Before calling directory assistance, the telephone book is a good place to look.

3. Thrilled by all the attention, Sallie's face lit up in a smile.
4. The sound of many cars honking their horns was heard while making a slow left turn.
5. To earn a place in the school orchestra, daily practice is necessary.
6. While waiting for the phone to ring, an interesting program was on television.
7. Relaxing on the beach, dark storm clouds appeared.
8. Surprised by the sudden sound of the alarm, the rescue trucks were hastily driven to the scene of the accident.
9. For the benefit of the audience, replacing the old seats was his first task as theater manager.
10. To help the candidate win the election, many signs must be made.
11. After sitting in the sun for a while, the lotion was applied.
12. Driving the boat too fast, from shore Dad shouted at me to slow down.
13. Before leaving town, the hotel bill needed to be paid.
14. Encouraged by the favorable reviews his first play received, another one was written almost immediately.
15. While making room on the desk for the new computer, the box of pencils fell to the floor.

EXERCISE 3 Writing Sentences with Modifiers

On your own paper, write complete sentences, using each of the modifiers given below as the introductory element of the sentence. To be sure you include a word or words the modifier can sensibly refer to, underline the word or words modified.

EX. 1. after class

1. After class, we all walked to the store.

1. before practicing the piano
2. jumping high into the air
3. delighted by the beautiful weather
4. to help his brother understand the problem better
5. while rummaging through the basement
6. after years of hard work
7. filled with pride
8. having read the article
9. skating circles around Fred
10. laughing softly

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