

MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

What are misplaced and dangling modifiers?

A modifier is a word or phrase that explains another word or phrase. A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier that is put in the wrong place. That is, it is not put next to the word or phrase it modifies but next to another word or phrase.

*She **only** ran before exams.*

This misplaced modifier creates confusion because the sentence now means that she did nothing but run before an exam but this seems an unrealistic statement. She must have done other actions as well, such as getting dressed to run.

A **dangling modifier** is a modifier that is left hanging without the words or phrases that it explains.

***Nearing the end of the run**, her thoughts raced faster.*

It is she who is running, not her thoughts. Thus, the subject (she) that the modifier (nearing the end of the run) is modifying is missing.

How do I recognize misplaced and dangling modifiers?

Look for the modifiers. Then look for the words or phrases that they modify. Are the modifiers next to the words or phrases that they modify? Think about these connections carefully and read for clarity.

How do I fix misplaced and dangling modifiers?

Fix a misplaced modifier by putting the modifier next to the word or phrase that it modifies:

*She ran **only** before exams.*

Fix a dangling modifier by revising the sentence to include the word or phrase that the modifier modifies:

***As she neared the end of the run**, her thoughts raced faster.*