

## Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

A **misplaced modifier** is a word, phrase, or clause that is improperly separated from the word or clause it modifies or describes. Because of this separation, the meaning of the sentence is often awkward, ridiculous, illogical, or confusing.

Example 1: On her way home, Jan found a **gold** man's watch.

Correction: On her way home, Jan found a man's gold watch.

Example 2: The dealer sold the Cadillac to the buyer **with leather seats**.

Correction: The dealer sold the Cadillac with the leather seats to the buyer.

Example 3: The waiter served a dinner roll to the woman **that was well buttered**.

Correction: The waiter served a dinner roll that was well buttered to the woman.

A **dangling modifier** is a phrase or clause that is not clearly and logically related to the word or words it modifies or describes. Often, they can be found at the beginning of sentences, but they are found at the end of sentences too. Dangling modifiers often include an -ing word (a gerund) or a to + verb (infinitive) phrase. Unlike misplaced modifiers, dangling modifiers cannot be fixed simply by moving it to a different place in the sentence. Either the sentence or the dangling modifier must be changed by adding needed information or rearranging the structure of one of the phrases or clauses.

Example 1: **Looking towards the west**, a tornado stirred up dust and debris.

Correction: **Looking towards the west, I saw that** a tornado stirred up dust and debris.

Example 2: **When nine years old**, my father enrolled in medical school.

Correction: **When I was nine years old**, my father enrolled in medical school.

Example 3: **Having been fixed the night before**, Tatiana could use the car.

Correction: **Since the car had been fixed the night before**, Tatiana could use it.

Directions: In the blank beside each sentence, indicate whether the sentence is a dangling modifier (DM) or a misplaced modifier (MM). Rewrite each sentence correctly and check the answers using the answer key below. Make sure to have a writing consultant check your rewritten sentences to ensure their correctness.

1. The truck on the bridge which is green is mine. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Expecting confusion, our plans were made. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Feeling hot, sweaters were taken off. \_\_\_\_\_

4. I showed my cat to the veterinarian with the fleas. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Bob told me he was getting married that afternoon at night. \_\_\_\_\_

6. This typewriter is used by a staff member with a wide carriage. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Swimming out into the sea, the current grew stronger. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Walking along the shore, a cruise ship suddenly appeared. \_\_\_\_\_
9. The Mazda was stalled on the highway out of gas. \_\_\_\_\_
10. He kept a tiny black book of all the women he had dated in his desk. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Upon entering the room, the messages are easily seen. \_\_\_\_\_
12. While at the amusement park, the sun shone brightly on all the tourists. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Landon should jump at whatever is demanded quickly. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Jodi kept all her medicine in the medicine cabinet that had been prescribed to her. \_\_\_\_\_
15. When only a toddler, Dad took me scuba diving. \_\_\_\_\_

## Answers:

- |       |       |        |        |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| 1. MM | 5. MM | 9. MM  | 13. MM |
| 2. DM | 6. MM | 10. MM | 14. MM |
| 3. DM | 7. DM | 11. DM | 15. DM |
| 4. MM | 8. DM | 12. DM |        |

## Misplaced Modifier Worksheet

Directions: Write "C" if the modifier is correctly placed; write "MM" if it is misplaced. In the "MM" sentences, rewrite the sentences correctly.

1. The woman was stopped for speeding in the green sweater.
2. I almost saw the whole movie, but I fell asleep towards the end of it.
3. Daniel promised to mow the lawn running out the door.
4. The names were those of the lovers carved on the tree.
5. There are only three spaces left in the parking lot.
6. Every two hours the nurse told him to take a pill.
7. Sitting on the porch, I took my last sip of lemonade.
8. The man walked toward us wearing a black fedora hat.
9. The plane crashed into a mountain carrying 200 passengers.
10. I hardly ate any food at the banquet dinner.
11. I watched the mechanic fix the bus with intrigue.
12. I earn a thousand dollars a month scarcely.
13. Reaching into the cabinet, I found the bag of chips.
14. We borrowed a leaf blower from a neighbor that was broken.

15. Climbing up a tree, Maria saw a squirrel.
16. Kevin, running quickly, disappeared around the corner.
17. The dog was rescued after the house was set on fire by a fireman.
18. We've almost found all the pieces of the shattered vase.
19. She vowed on her birthday to go skydiving.
20. We need gas badly.

## Answers:

1. MM The woman in the green sweater was stopped for speeding.
2. MM I saw almost the whole movie, but I fell asleep towards the end of it.
3. MM Running out the door, Daniel promised to mow the lawn.
4. MM The names carved on the tree were those of the lovers.
5. C
6. MM The nurse told him to take a pill every two hours.
7. C
8. MM The man wearing a black fedora hat walked towards us.
9. MM The plane carrying 200 passengers crashed into a mountain.
10. MM I ate hardly any food at the banquet dinner.
11. MM I watched with intrigue the mechanic fix the bus.
12. MM I scarcely earn a thousand dollars a month.
13. C
14. MM We borrowed a leaf blower that was broken from a neighbor.
15. MM Maria saw a squirrel climbing a tree.
16. C
17. MM The dog was rescued by a fireman after the house was set on fire.
18. MM We've found almost all the pieces of the shattered vase.
19. MM She vowed to go skydiving on her birthday.
20. MM We badly need gas.

## Dangling Modifier Worksheet

Directions: Draw a line under the dangling modifier in each of the following sentences.

1. Driving in heavy L.A. traffic, my head started to pound.
2. Fishing for bass, our boat flipped over.
3. Crossing the border, my car was searched.
4. Searching my wallet, my missing credit card was found.
5. A shovel was used, digging the hole.

Answers:

1. Driving in heavy L.A. traffic, my head started to pound.
2. Fishing for bass, our boat flipped over.
3. Crossing the border, my car was searched.
4. Searching my wallet, my missing credit card was found.
5. A shovel was used, digging the hole.

Directions: Write "DM" if a dangling modifier is present or "C" if the sentence is correct.

- \_\_\_ 1. Chasing his brother, Ryan fell and bruised his knee.
- \_\_\_ 2. Feeling nervous, stomachs were queasy.
- \_\_\_ 3. Running scared, the bear climbed the tree.
- \_\_\_ 4. Laughing hysterically, the story was repeated.
- \_\_\_ 5. Slipping on the wet pavement, her leg was broken.

Answers:

1. C    2. DM    3. C    4. DM    5. C

Directions: All of the following sentences have dangling modifiers. Rewrite each sentence correctly in the space provided below. Because answers will vary, have a writing consultant check your answers.

1. Reaching the finals, the game was won by the Lions.

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2. Playing skillfully, a touchdown was made by the visiting team.

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3. Raising his hand, the question was answered by Thomas.

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4. Planting tomatoes, her knees got filthy.

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5. Speaking for the committee, the issue was raised by Victoria.

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