

A **modifier** is a word or phrase that describes or adds detail to another word or phrase. When used correctly, modifiers improve clarity in writing. However, when used incorrectly, **misplaced** and **dangling modifiers** can cause confusion. While this resource provides general information about modifiers, writers should always tailor their work to their audience and assignment.

## Modifiers

Modifiers can be single words or full phrases. Common modifiers include **adjectives** (describing nouns), **adverbs** (describing verbs), and **prepositional phrases** (indicating time, location, direction, etc.). To improve clarity, modifiers should be placed as close as possible to the word or phrase they are modifying.

**Example:** They heard **loud** noises. (adjective)

**Example:** That dog barked **loudly**. (adverb)

**Example:** She went **around the corner** to the library. (prepositional phrase)

Additional modifier types include articles, possessives, and demonstratives. **Articles** (*the, a, and an*) determine general or specific. **Possessive adjectives** (*my, their, your, his, her, its, and our*) and **possessive pronouns** (*mine, yours, his, hers, theirs, ours*) determine who possesses the word being modified. **Demonstratives** (*this, these, that, those*) determine proximity to the word or phrase being modified.

**Example:** He took **the** train. (article)

**Example:** That is **our** dog who barked. (possessive)

**Example:** She is on **that** team. (demonstrative)

## Misplaced Modifiers

A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier that is placed too far away from the subject it describes. This can create confusion about which word is being modified. To fix this, simply identify which word is meant to be modified and place the modifier as close to that word as possible.

**Misplaced:** We took our *cat* to the veterinarian **with an injured paw**. (The word being modified is distanced from the modifier.)

**Corrected:** We took our *cat* **with an injured paw** to the veterinarian.

## Dangling Modifiers

A **dangling modifier** occurs when the part of the sentence being modified is missing. Usually, a dangling modifier is found near the beginning of the sentence and starts with either a “*verb + ing*” or a “*to + verb*” phrase. To fix this, identify what word is meant to be modified and add or move it next to the modifier.

**Dangling:** After watching the movie, the book was better. (missing subject)

**Corrected:** **After watching the movie**, *Tim* decided the book was better.