

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

In written English, every modifier should clearly modify something. Both dangling modifiers and misplaced modifiers lead to sentences that do not mean what their writers intended. Although dangling and misplaced modifiers can pose some **serious** problems in writing, **they can be fun to read**.

A dangling modifier fails to refer logically to any word in the sentence.

Examples:

- Dangling** Riding my bicycle, a dog chases me. (*Riding* modifies nothing, and it cannot logically modify dog; **certainly, the dog is not the one riding the bicycle.**)
- Revised** While I was riding my bicycle, a dog chased me.
- Dangling** Sitting in the back row of the theater, the actors could hardly be heard.
- Revised** Sitting in the back row of the theater, we could hardly hear the actors.
- Dangling** Although only four years old, my father insisted that I learn to read.
- Revised** Although I was only four years old, my father insisted that I learn to read.

A misplaced modifier does modify a word, but not the one the author intended.

Examples:

- Misplaced** He bought a Great Dane from a neighbor that was already housebroken. (The author actually intended to modify the dog; we would certainly hope that the neighbor had been housebroken long before this point.)
- Revised** He bought a Great Dane that was already housebroken from a neighbor.
- Misplaced** I read your editorial about juvenile delinquents with enthusiasm.
- Revised** I read with enthusiasm your editorial about juvenile delinquents.
- Misplaced** The king returned to the clinic where he had undergone heart surgery in 1986 in a limousine sent by the White House.
- Revised** Traveling in a limousine sent by the White House, the king returned to the clinic where he had undergone heart surgery in 1986.