# Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

What is a modifier?   
Modifiers are words that add to or restrict the noun it modifies. They can be adjectives, nouns, or participles. Participles are verbs used as an adjective and can be a word or a phrase either in past or present tense. All modifiers should be located near the noun that they describe.

What is a dangling modifier?   
A dangling modifier occurs when a descriptive phrase is not located near the word it describes. The phrase simply “dangles” from the main sentence. This creates confusion for readers who might not see the connection between the modifier and the sentence.

**Example:** Swimming at the lake, a rock cut Sue’s foot.

Was the rock swimming at the lake? The main sentence, “A rock cut Sue’s foot,” suggests that “the rock” is the subject. Therefore, the main sentence should be rearranging to put Sue closer to the modifier.

Solution: Swimming at the lake, Sue cut her foot on a rock.

**Example:** With a frown, the memo was sent by the manager.

Did the memo have a frown? The main sentence suggests that the memo was sent by the manager, but the order of the sentence has placed “the memo” closer to “frown.” Again, the main sentence should be arranged to put the noun that is being modified next to the modifier.

Solution: With a frown, the manager sent the memo.

What is a misplaced modifier?   
Misplaced modifier are awkwardly placed within a sentence and do not modify the noun that the writer intended, obscuring the meaning of the sentence.

**Example**: Tony bought an old car from a crooked dealer with a faulty transmission.

Does the crooked dealer has a faulty transmission? By moving the modifying phrase closer to the noun, “car,” the meaning will be clear.

Solution: Tony bought an old car with a faulty transmission from a crooked dealer.

**Example**: I nearly earned two hundred dollars last week.

Did the person actually earn nothing? What the writer intended was they just missed earning two hundred dollars. Moving the word “nearly” closer to what it is modifying, “two hundred dollars,” will clarify this for the reader.

Solution: I earned nearly two hundred dollars last week.

## Exercises

**Identify the following sentences as either a dangling or misplaced modifier by circling one or the other. Rewrite the sentence to put the noun being modified near the modifier.**

1. The buzzard attacked the bus driver from the sky at her first bus stop. **(Dangling/Misplaced)**
2. Extremely hungry, the left-over munchie meal was devoured.

**(Dangling/Misplaced**

1. Jezebel’s screech sent the computer flying in the basement from its stand. **(Dangling/Misplaced)**
2. Hopping over the hedges, the car looked rather small.

**(Dangling/Misplaced)**

1. Andrew noticed that Leon was wearing a white jacket to the interview which was stained with ketchup from breakfast.

**(Dangling/Misplaced)**

1. Kicking and squealing, the distress was apparent for James Franco. **(Dangling/Misplaced)**

1. Langan, John and Zoe L. Albright. “Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers.” *English Skills with Readings*. McGraw Hill Education, 9th ed., 2015, pp. 433-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)