

Dangling Modification

A dangling or misplaced modifier* is an introductory phrase* or clause at the beginning of a sentence that is misplaced because the word it modifies is not actually in the sentence or is too far away from the word it is intended to modify.

KEY: An opening phrase/clause must modify the subject. The subject must be the first word to follow the comma separating the phrase from the sentence.

*A modifier changes, alters, limits, or adds more info to something else in the sentence.

* A phrase is a collection of words that work together but doesn't contain a verb.

For example:

Walking down the street, butterflies flew into the girl's net. **Incorrect**

This version suggests that the butterflies were walking down the street!

Walking down the street, the girl caught butterflies in her net. **Correct**

In this version, the girl is walking down the street.

KEY: When you see an opening phrase, ask “who or what?”

For example:

“Walking down the street—”

Who was walking down the street? The girl was walking down the street.

Key: When a sentence begins with the *ing* (present participle) or *to* form of a verb (infinitive), check for dangling modification issues.

Complete the Dangling Modification Worksheets* on the HSDQ Student Homepage and watch the Dangling Modification Video after you read this article. (Go to the WORKSHEETS and VIDEO LESSONS Icons on the upper right corner of the Student Homepage.)

The Guide to Grammar by Laura Wilson provides more Dangling Modification practice. You can purchase this book on Amazon.