

DANGLING MODIFIERS

A dangling modifier is usually an introductory word group that does not refer clearly to some word in the sentence. Placing an appropriate noun or pronoun either in the word group or near it will correct the problem. Study the following:

Dangling: After buying some groceries, a meal was cooked. (Did the meal buy the groceries?)
Clear: After buying some groceries, we cooked a meal.
After we had bought some groceries, we cooked a meal.

Dangling: When studying at night, a good lamp should be available. (Was the lamp studying?)
Clear: When studying at night, a student should use a good lamp.
When a student studies at night, he should use a good lamp.

Dangling modifiers may also be found at the end of a sentence, though this is less common.

Dangling: Breakfast was served after getting up in the morning. (Could breakfast wake up and eat?)
Clear: The newlyweds were served breakfast after getting up in the morning.
Breakfast was served after the newlyweds got up in the morning.

Directions: Place a check by the clear sentence in each pair.

- 1a. ___ While reading the newspaper, the new ZZ Top album was playing.
1b. ___ While reading the newspaper, I was playing the new ZZ Top album.
- 2a. ___ My family moved to California at the age of ten.
2b. ___ My family moved to California when I was ten.
- 3a. ___ While Mary was watering her lawn, a Frisbee hit her on the leg.
3b. ___ While watering her lawn, a Frisbee hit Mary on the leg.
- 4a. ___ The floor was finally finished, having worked all day.
4b. ___ Having worked all day, we finally finished the floor.
- 5a. ___ To write well, good books must be read.
5b. ___ To write well, a student must read good books.
- 6a. ___ In reaching for a second helping, Matilda dislocated her shoulder.
6b. ___ In reaching for a second helping, her shoulder was dislocated.
- 7a. ___ Because he had very little money, college was out of the question.
7b. ___ Having very little money, college was out of the question.

Directions: Revise each of the following sentences.

8. Riding his bike, a car hit Billy.
9. After locating the apartment, it was found to be unsatisfactory.
10. Although interested in track and football, basketball is my favorite sport.
11. Our trip was terrific, being able to stop and sightsee along the way.
12. While trying on a new pair of shoes, a fire truck roared by the store.
13. Walking down the street, the lovely building was admired.
14. Sneaking into the locker room at night, seven basketballs were stolen.
15. Running into the room, her engagement was announced.
16. By paying one hundred dollars, the fence was painted.
17. Switching on the light, a mouse scurried across the room.
18. To protect the roof from undue strain, the snow and ice were cleared off.
19. Being a hopeless old drunk, nobody would have anything to do with him.
20. A flashlight is a necessity when visiting such places after dark.