

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

(Unit 7-3200)

Information about misplaced modifiers can be found in 3200--frames 1488-1526. A misplaced modifier is an adjective or adverb that is out of position. These modifiers may be clauses, phrases, or single words. When they are out of place, the sentence will be awkward or confusing. In most cases, modifiers should be near the words they modify. Study the following examples:

Confusing: This table was made by an old carpenter with carved legs.
(Does the writer mean the carpenter has carved legs?)

Clear: This table with carved legs was made by an old carpenter.

Confusing: A man drove past in a Corvette that was completely bald.
(Have you ever seen a bald car?)

Clear: A man that was completely bald drove past in a Corvette.

Confusing: Hawkins developed cancer shortly after he had married and died.
(Could anyone develop cancer after he had already died?)

Clear: Shortly after he had married, Hawkins developed cancer and died.

Note: The following words are often misplaced: almost, only, just, even, hardly, not, nearly, merely. These words are usually placed in front of the words they modify.

Confusing: The folk singer only sang one song. (This incorrectly emphasizes the word "sang.")

Clear: The folk singer sang only one song.

Directions: Place a check by the clear sentences in each pair

1a. ___ Jane stomped on the bug without shoes on.

1b. ___ Without shoes on, Jane stomped on the bug.

2a. ___ Mabel, who was wearing her nightgown, let in the meter reader.

2b. ___ Mabel let in the meter reader who was wearing her nightgown.

3a. ___ The winner of the pie-eating contest almost ate five pies in ten minutes.

3b. ___ The winner of the pie-eating contest ate almost five pies in ten minutes

4a. ___ The man picked up the box of books with arthritis.

4b. ___ The man with arthritis picked up the box of books.

5a. ___ I only saw two dollars on the table.

5b. ___ I saw only two dollars on the table.

6a. ___ I gave my dress to Jackie with the low neckline.

6b. ___ I gave my dress with the low neckline to Jackie.

7a. ___ Looking straight at the student through her bifocals, the teacher awaited his answer.

7b. ___ Looking straight at the student, the teacher awaited his answer through her bifocals.

Directions: Revise each of the following sentences so there are no misplaced modifiers.

8. The candidates discussed the problem of the federal deficit at the college.
9. The boy is sitting on the fence with red hair and whistling.
10. She watched her brothers play baseball in her new outfit.
11. I only want one sandwich for lunch.
12. My dad kept a Model A in the garage that he let me take apart whenever I wanted.
13. Joe just likes one kind of ice cream.
14. Debbie knew that chicken always pleased Ed when fried.
15. I saw him trying to copy my paper with my own eyes.
16. Marge has a wild personality who is a good friend of mine.
17. On the corner stood Grandpa with his old straw hat gesturing wildly.
18. I almost have my television on all the time to Channel 5.
19. Joe saw Foster hit a homerun with a cast on his leg.
20. I have some candy in my desk drawer that my mom made.