Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a word or phrase incorrectly separated from the word it modifies. Correcting misplaced modifiers is easy: just move the modifier closer to the word it modifies.

Below are five common misplaced modifiers.

Dangling Modifiers

Tip: Rearrange the sentence so that it begins with the word being modified or change the modifier to a subordinate clause with a subject and a verb.

Incorrect: Walking in the rain, his jacket got wet.  
Explanation: “His jacket” cannot walk in the rain.

Correct: Walking in the rain, he got his jacket wet.  
Explanation: “Walking in the rain” correctly modifies “he.”

Or

After he walked in the rain, his jacket got wet.  
Explanation: The sentence has a subordinate clause.

Misplaced Clauses

Tip: Place the clause next to the noun it modifies.

Incorrect: A piano fell out the window weighing 300 pounds.  
Explanation: The window does not weigh 300 pounds.

Correct: A piano weighing 300 pounds fell out the window.  
Explanation: “Weighing 300 pounds” correctly modifies piano.

Misplaced Phrases

Tip: Place the phrase next the phrase next to the noun it modifies.

Incorrect: I threw my book in the trash with the missing pages.  
Explanation: The trash does not have missing pages.

Correct: I threw my book with the missing pages in the trash.  
Explanation: “With the missing pages” correctly modifies the book.

Misplaced Adverbs

Tip: Place the adverb in front of the word it modifies.

Correct: Just Jason ate the apple.  
Explanation: This sentence is correct if and only if Jason and no one else ate the apple.

Correct: Jason just ate an apple.  
Explanation: This sentence is correct if and only if Jason ate the apple now.

Correct: Jason ate just an apple.  
Explanation: This sentence is correct if and only if Jason ate an apple and nothing else.