

3. Black cowboys often guarded the railroad boss and his cash payroll for example, the black cowhand Bose Ikard often guarded up to \$20,000 and “never lost a dime.”
4. Stagecoach Mary battled blizzards, rain, and heat as she delivered the US mail to isolated cabins in Montana, in addition, this elderly black woman managed to fight off thieves and wolves along the way.
5. Paul W. Stewart spent eleven years collecting information and artifacts about African Americans in the West as a result, everyone can see the displays at the Black American West Museum in Denver, Colorado.

CHAPTER 14

Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

14a What is a misplaced modifier?

A **modifier** is a word or group of words that describes or limits another word or group of words. A **misplaced modifier** is positioned incorrectly in a sentence, which means, therefore, that it describes the wrong word and changes the writer’s meaning. Always place a modifier as close as possible to what it describes.

Avoiding squinting modifiers

A **squinting modifier** is misplaced because it modifies both the word that comes before it and the word that follows it. Check that your modifiers are placed so that they communicate the meaning you intend.

NO The football player being recruited **eagerly** believed each successive offer would be better. [What was *eager*? The recruitment or the player’s belief?]

YES The football player being recruited believed **eagerly** that each successive offer would be better.

YES The football player being **eagerly** recruited believed that each successive offer would be better.

Placing limiting words carefully

Words such as *only*, *not only*, *just*, *not just*, *almost*, *hardly*, *nearly*, *even*, *exactly*, *merely*, *scarcely*, and *simply* serve to limit the meaning of a word according to where they are placed. When you use such words, position them precisely. Consider how moving the placement of the word *only* changes the meaning of this sentence: *Professional coaches say that high salaries motivate players.*

Only professional coaches say that high salaries motivate players.
[No one else says this.]

Professional coaches **only** say that high salaries motivate players.
[The coaches probably do not mean what they say.]

Professional coaches say **only** that high salaries motivate players.
[The coaches say nothing else.]

Professional coaches say that **only** high salaries motivate players.
[Nothing except high salaries motivates players.]

Professional coaches say that high salaries **only** motivate players.
[High salaries do nothing other than motivate players.]

Professional coaches say that high salaries motivate **only** players.
[High salaries do motivate the players but not the coaches and managers.]

14b How can I avoid split infinitives?

An INFINITIVE is a VERB form that starts with *to*: *to motivate*, *to convince*, *to create* are examples (see 7d). A **split infinitive** occurs when words are placed between the word *to* and its verb. The effect is awkward.

NO Orson Welles's radio drama "War of the Worlds" managed **to, in October 1938, convince** listeners that they were hearing an invasion by Martians. [*In October 1938* is misplaced because the words come between *to* and *convince*.]

YES **In October 1938,** Orson Welles's radio drama "War of the Worlds" managed **to** convince listeners that they were hearing an invasion by Martians.

Often, the word that splits an infinitive is an ADVERB ending in *-ly*. In general, place adverbs either before or after the infinitive.

NO People feared that they would no longer be able **to happily live** in peace.

YES People feared that they would no longer be able **to live happily** in peace.

The rule about split infinitives has changed recently. Current usage says that when the best placement for a single adverb is actually between *to* and the verb, use that structure freely.

Welles wanted **to realistically portray** a Martian invasion for the radio audience.

If you want to avoid splitting infinitives in your ACADEMIC WRITING, revise to avoid the split:

Welles wanted his “Martian invasion” **to sound realistic** for the radio audience. [The adverb *realistically* was changed to the adjective *realistic*.]

14c How can I avoid other splits in my sentences?

When too many words split—that is, come between—a SUBJECT and its VERB or between a verb and its OBJECT, the result is a sentence that lurches rather than flows from beginning to end.

NO Many churches **held** for their frightened communities “**end of the world**” **prayer services**. [The verb *held* is placed too far away from the object “*end of the world*” *prayer services*, so this split is too large.]

YES Many churches **held** “**end of the world**” **prayer services** for their frightened communities. [The verb and object, *held* “*end of the world*” *prayer services*, aren’t split.]

EXERCISE 14-1 Revise these ten sentences to correct misplaced modifiers, split infinitives, and other splits. If a sentence is correct, circle its number. For help, consult 14a through 14c.

EXAMPLE Barrow, Alaska, is closer to the North Pole located on the Arctic Ocean than any other US city.

Located on the Arctic Ocean, Barrow, Alaska, is closer to the North Pole than any other US city.

1. The 4,400 residents of Barrow, Alaska, in a region where wind chills can go down to 100 degrees below zero Fahrenheit not only survive but thrive.
2. Fran Tate runs Pepe’s North of the Border, the Mexican restaurant closest to the North Pole, and she asks customers to every time they visit sign her guest book.
3. Fran nearly sends Christmas cards and a personal note to the 7,000 people on her list, including psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers and basketball legend Karl Malone.
4. At Ipalook Elementary School’s enormous indoor playground, students who are playing happily go outside whenever the weather is above 20 degrees below zero Fahrenheit.
5. Residents, because they have no mail or movie theater, read, talk with friends in town, chat on the Internet, and enjoy the peace and quiet of the open tundra.

EXERCISE 14-2 Using each list of words and phrases, create all the possible logical sentences. Insert commas as needed. Explain differences in meaning among the alternatives you create. For help, consult 14a through 14c.

EXAMPLE exchange students
 learned to speak French
 while in Paris
 last summer

- A. Last summer, / exchange students / learned to speak French / while in Paris.
 B. While in Paris, / exchange students / learned to speak French / last summer.
 C. Exchange students / learned to speak French / while in Paris / last summer.
 D. Exchange students / learned to speak French / last summer / while in Paris.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. chicken soup
 according to folklore
 helps
 cure colds</p> <p>3. the young driver
 while driving
 in the snow
 skidded
 carelessly</p> <p>5. and cause mini-avalanches
 ski patrollers
 set explosives
 often to prevent big avalanches</p> | <p>2. tadpoles
 instinctively
 swim toward
 their genetic relatives</p> <p>4. climbed
 the limber teenager
 a tall palm tree
 to pick a ripe coconut
 quickly</p> |
|---|--|

DANGLING MODIFIERS

14d How can I avoid dangling modifiers?

A **dangling modifier** describes or limits a word or words that never actually appear in the sentence. Aware of the intended meaning, the writer unconsciously supplies the missing words, but the reader can become confused. To correct a dangling modifier, state clearly your intended **SUBJECT** in the sentence.

NO **Having read Faulkner’s short story “A Rose for Emily,”**
the ending surprised us. [This sentence says *the ending* was
reading the story, which is impossible.]

YES Having read Faulkner’s short story “A Rose for Emily,” **we**
were surprised by the ending. [Second half of sentence is
 rewritten to include the subject *we*.]

YES **We** read Faulkner’s short story “A Rose for Emily” **and were**
surprised by the ending. [Sentence is rewritten to include the
 subject *We*.]

A major cause of dangling modifiers is the unnecessary use of the **PASSIVE VOICE**. Whenever possible, use the **ACTIVE VOICE**.

NO To earn money, china-painting lessons were offered by Emily to wealthy young women. [*China-painting lessons cannot earn money. Were offered by Emily* is in the passive voice.]

YES To earn money, Emily offered china-painting lessons to wealthy young women. [Change to the active voice; *Emily offered* corrects the problem.]

EXERCISE 14-3 Identify and correct any dangling modifiers in these sentences. If a sentence is correct, circle its number. For help, consult 14d.

EXAMPLE To succeed as scientists, obstacles must be overcome by women.

To succeed as scientists, women must overcome obstacles.

1. In the past, few high-status science awards were won by women, a situation that failed to give many outstanding women scientists the recognition they deserve.
2. Attaining the highest achievements and awards has been beyond the grasp of even the most gifted women scientists.
3. Rising from 12 percent in the mid-1980s to 20 percent today, an increasingly greater membership for women in the National Academy of Sciences is expected.
4. Having chosen seventy-two new members in 2003, seventeen were women, a larger number than ever before.
5. By discovering that a surprisingly large number of human genes control the sense of smell, Dr. Linda Buck earned her Academy membership.

CHAPTER 15

Shifting and Mixed Sentences

SHIFTING SENTENCES

15a What is a shifting sentence?

A **shift** within a sentence is an unnecessary, abrupt change in PERSON, NUMBER, SUBJECT, VOICE, TENSE, MOOD, or DIRECT or INDIRECT DISCOURSE. These shifts blur meaning. Sometimes a shift occurs between two or more sentences in a paragraph. If you set out on one track (writing in FIRST PERSON, for example), your readers expect you to stay on that same track (and not