

MODIFIERS

A modifier is a word or group of words that describes something else in the sentence. When sentences have misplaced, ambiguous, or dangling modifiers, readers can be confused about the exact meaning of the sentences. The key is to put the modifier next to what it is describing.

Misplaced Modifiers:

Television stations carried the story of the disastrous fire *in every part of the nation*.

- *What is in every part of the nation? The fire? TV stations?*
- **Better:**
 - Television stations *in every part of the nation* carried the story of the disastrous fire.

We scanned the menu *with hungry eyes*.

- *Did the menu have hungry eyes?*
- **Better:**
 - *With hungry eyes*, we scanned the menu.

He *almost* waited two hours for the bus.

- *Did he decide not to wait? With the “almost” next to “waited”, it looks like he almost had to wait, but then did not for some reason.*
- **Better:**
 - He waited *almost* two hours for the bus.

Ambiguous Modifiers:

Singers who do not warm up *gradually* lost their voices.

- *Did they warm up gradually or gradually lose their voices?*
- Reword to make it clear.

Dangling Modifiers:

Driving along the highway, the blinding sun obscured our view of the oncoming car.

- *Who was driving? The sun?*
- **Better:**
 - *While we drove* along the highway, the blinding sun obscured our view of the oncoming car.

While relaxing in my backyard hammock, a neighbor’s basketball hit me on the head.

- *Was the basketball relaxing in the hammock?*
- **Better:**
 - *While I was* relaxing in my backyard hammock, a neighbor’s basketball hit me on the head.