

Dangling Modifiers

A modifier that starts a sentence must be followed right away by the word it is meant to describe. Otherwise, the modifier is said to be dangling, and the sentence takes on an unintended meaning. Look at this example:

Staring dreamily off into space, the teacher's loud voice startled me.

The modifier *I* is followed by *I*, giving the impression that the voice was staring off into space. However, this is not what the author intended. The modifier was meant to describe a word that is missing: *I*

There are two ways to correct a dangling modifier:

1. Add a subject and verb to the opening word group, and revise as necessary.
As I was staring dreamily off into space, the teacher's loud voice startled me.
2. Place the word or words being described immediately after the opening word group, and revise as necessary.
Staring dreamily off into space, **I was startled by** the teacher's loud voice.

Here are more examples of dangling modifiers and ways they can be corrected:

- Dangling modifier:* When pulling out of the driveway, the hedge blocks Tracy's view.
(Is the *hedge* pulling out of the driveway?)
- Corrected versions:* **Whenever Tracy pulls** out of the driveway, the hedge blocks her view.
Or: When pulling out of the driveway, **Tracy finds that** the hedge blocks **her** view.
- Dangling modifier:* Delighted with the movie, conversation over coffee ended our evening.
(Was the *conversation* delighted with the movie?)
- Corrected versions:* **We were** delighted with the movie **and** ended our evening with conversation over coffee. Or: Delighted with the movie, **we** ended our evening **with** conversation over coffee.

Practice 3

In each sentence, the dangling modifier is underlined. Then, on the line provided the sentence is rewritten so that the intended meaning is clear.

1. While taking a shower, a mouse ran across my bathroom floor.
While I was taking a shower, a mouse ran across my bathroom floor.
2. Sitting on the front porch, mosquitoes became annoying.
Sitting on the front porch, we were annoyed by mosquitoes.
3. While eating at the restaurant, Kareem's coat was stolen.
While Kareem was eating at the restaurant, his coat was stolen.
4. Breathing heavily, the finish line finally came into the runner's view.
Breathing heavily, the runner finally saw the finish line come into view.
5. Hoping to catch a glimpse of the band, the parking lot was full of fans.

Hoping to catch a glimpse of the band, fans filled the parking lot.