

Dangling Modifiers

CORRECT DANGLING MODIFIERS

Modifiers must point clearly to the words they describe. Otherwise, sentences may seem illogical. This happens if you forget to mention the word a modifier is supposed to describe. In such cases, the modifier is said to “dangle”; it has nothing to hang on to. Say you wrote

Dangling: *Walking across the field, the river came into view.*

Your reader would surely know that you – not the river – were walking. But that’s not what the sentence says. To correct dangling modifiers, add the word(s) you forgot. To do so, however, you might have to rewrite the sentence.

Revised: *Walking across the field, I saw the river.*

Now, *Walking across the field* clearly points to the pronoun *I*.

Working with *It Is* and *It Was* Constructions

You might create a dangling modifier if you follow a modifier with a main clause whose subject is *it* and whose verb is *was* or another form of *to be*.

Dangling: *Concerned about the rain, it was decided that the picnic should be canceled.*

[*Concerned about the rain* has nothing to modify except the word *it*, which refers to no word in the sentence.]

Revised: *Concerned about the rain, our club decided to call off the picnic.*

[Now, *Concerned about the rain* clearly refers to *club*, a subject the reader can identify.]

Sample Quiz questions:

1. Click on the sentence that contains a dangling modifier.
 - a. Touching Anna’s hand, Enrique’s heart pounded.
 - b. Touching Anna’s hand, Enrique felt his heart pounding.
 - c. Enrique’s heart pounded as he touched Anna’s hand.

Answer: a. Touching Anna’s hand, Enrique’s heart pounded.

2. Click on the sentence that contains a dangling modifier.
 - a. She heard a scream as she approached the house.

- b. A scream was heard approaching the house.
- c. Approaching the house, she heard a scream.

Answer: b. A scream was heard approaching the house.