



WRITING CENTRE

DANGLING MODIFIERS

A dangling modifier says something different from what is meant because words are left out. It is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence; it describes, clarifies, or gives more detail about a concept.

We often use phrases to describe words within sentences, and we determine the meaning of our sentences by placing these descriptive phrases next to the words they point to or "modify". For example, the sentence, "I saw a boy running down the street," indicates that the "boy" was doing the running. However, if we wrote, "Running down the street, I saw the boy," we would be suggesting to readers that "I" was doing the running.

INCORRECT EXAMPLES

Seeing that the work was done, it was time to go home.

"Seeing" is an action, but the sentence does not tell us *who* is doing the action. We know that someone *saw* that the work was done and decided to go home, but we don't know who it is.

While out for a jog, a piece of gum got stuck to Jack's shoe.

This sentence leads us to believe that the gum, and not Jack, was out for the jog.

The car was started, having found the keys.

Again, this sentence is misleading; it sounds as though the car found the keys and then started itself.

These examples show us what a dangling modifier can do to a sentence. They usually confuse the reader by not specifying certain points that are necessary.



CORRECT EXAMPLES

Seeing that the work was done, Jill decided to head home.

Now we know that it was Jill who finished the work and decided to go home; the sentence is much more specific in this regard.

Jack was out for a jog when a piece of gum got stuck to his shoe.

It is clear from this sentence that Jack was out for a jog when he stepped in gum; again, it is much more specific.

Having found the keys, Bernard started the car.

We are now aware that it was Bernard who found the keys and started the car.

These examples show us that without a dangling modifier, things are made much clearer in sentences. They make a lot more sense, and we can easily understand everything they are trying to convey to us.

Sources:

"Dangling Modifiers." (n.d.). Retrieved from

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_dangmod.html

"Dangling Modifiers." (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://englishplus.com/grammar/0000012.htm>

"Modifiers." (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/modifiers.html>