Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Student Name:

Instructor:

Date:

Course:

# About This DLA

## Important Note

All the activities (4) in the DLA must be completed in their entirety before receiving credit for completion. Students are welcome to meet with a tutor if they need help, but please be aware that students might need a second appointment for review and signature in that case. If your instructor wants evidence of this completed DLA, return this form to him or her with the tutor’s signature included.

## Learning outcomes

Through computer and other independent work, this activity will help you identify dangling and misplaced modifiers and revise sentences to correct these errors.

## Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

# Understanding Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that describe (modify) something in a sentence.

Modifier examples:

* the **golden** statue (word)
* the statue **in the shrine** (phrase)
* the statue **that Indiana Jones took** (clause)

Modifier examples that limit another word or words:

* **forty** soldiers (tells exactly how many soldiers)
* the book **that his father gave him** (tells which book)
* She **never** visits. (tells how often)

Modifiers can make your writing more specific and more concrete. Used effectively and correctly, modifiers give the reader a clear, exact picture of what you want to say.

Modifiers need to be next to the word, phrase, or clause they modify. Modifiers, if used incorrectly, can cause confusion in a sentence.

## Steps to check for modifier errors:

1. Find the modifier(s).
2. Ask, “Does the modifier have something to modify?”
3. Ask, “Is the modifier in the right place, as close as possible to the word, phrase, or clause that it modifies?”

## Correcting Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier modifies the wrong word or words. Misplaced modifiers may also unnecessarily divide closely related parts of sentences (like infinitives).

**Example 1:**

**Wrong**: Indiana was driving a Humvee carrying a rocket launcher.

1. Find the modifiers: **driving a Humvee** and **carrying a rocket launcher**
2. Does the modifier have something to modify? The answer is yes. Indiana was driving a Humvee. Indiana was carrying a rocket launcher. Both modifiers go with Indiana.
3. Are the modifiers in the right place? The answer is yes and no.  
   Yes: One modifier is in the right place: Indiana was **driving a Humvee**.  
   No: The other is not: a Humvee **carrying a rocket launcher**

**Correct**: Indiana was **driving a Humvee** and was **carrying a rocket launcher**.

**Example 2:**

**Wrong**: Searching for the Holy Grail, the tank helped the two archeologists travel through the desert.

1. Find the modifier: **searching for the Holy Grail**
2. Does the modifier have something to modify: The answer is yes. There are *two archeologists*. The archeologists are **searching for the Holy Grail.**
3. Is the modifier in the right place: The answer is yes and no.  
   Yes: There are two archeologists.  
   No: The tank is not searching for the Holy Grail.

**Correct**: **Searching for the Holy Grail**, two archeologists traveled in a tank through the desert.

Modifiers like almost, even, exactly, hardly, just, merely, nearly, only, scarcely, and simply should be as close as possible to what they modify.

**Wrong**: Marion wants to **only** go back home. (The modifier *only* is placed by *wants*, so it sounds as if Marion wants only one goal in life: to go back home.)

**Correct**: Marion wants **only** to go home.

## Correcting Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a modifier that does not modify anything in the subject.

**Wrong**: Excavating in Egypt, many mummies could be seen.

1. Find the modifiers: **Excavating in Egypt** and **many**
2. Do the modifiers have something to modify? The answer is yes and no. The word **many**modifies *mummies.* But who or what is excavating in Egypt? There is no person mentioned in this sentence, and the mummies aren’t doing the excavating.

**Correct**: **Excavating in Egypt**, the *archeologists* saw **many** mummies.

# Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

## 1. Online Quiz

Go to http://tinyurl.com/DanglingMisplacedModifiersDLA and take the [Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers DLA Quiz](http://tinyurl.com/DanglingMisplacedModifiersDLA). You must score at least 80% on the exercises before seeing a tutor. After you complete the task, **PLEASE ASK A LAB TUTOR OR FRONT DESK ATTENDANT TO PRINT THE PAGE THAT HAS YOUR SCORE. DO NOT EXIT THE PROGRAM UNTIL THIS PAGE HAS BEEN PRINTED (FREE OF CHARGE).** If you have any other questions, do not hesitate to ask a lab tutor.

## 2. Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers Review

| Write the answer. |
| --- |
| What is the difference between misplaced and dangling modifiers? |
|  |
|  |
|  |

## 3. Paragraph Correction

Read about Steven Spielberg, director of Indiana Jones, and on a separate sheet of paper, edit the following paragraphs to eliminate misplaced and dangling modifiers. There are ten (10) misplaced and dangling modifier errors.

Hearing the name Steven Spielberg, great movies come to mind. *E.T.*, *Indiana Jones*, *Schindler’s List*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *Lincoln* are just a few of the blockbuster movies directed by Spielberg. These movies alone have almost grossed two trillion dollars in box office receipts.

Born in Cincinnati in 1946, life was normal for Spielberg. As a teenager, Universal Studios gave Spielberg many opportunities to film. Dropping out of Cal State University in Long Beach, pursuing his career in entertainment was his primary goal. Spielberg began editing and directing for television and short films. Twenty years after Spielberg nearly entered the entertainment industry, he directed the blockbuster *ET: the Extra Terrestrial*. Since *ET*, Spielberg has won commercial and critical acclaim for many of his films.

Numerous actors have also benefited from Spielberg’s experience. Learning from a great director, Spielberg provides guidance to many actors. Many actors even go on to direct movies of their own. In addition to offering guidance to fledgling actors and directors, Spielberg is almost known anywhere for his realistic perspective on historical events. Brilliantly directing the scene, we get the soldiers’ perspectives of the historical event. Films produced and directed by Spielberg often possess other trademarks. For example, a piano is used in key scenes frequently. World War II is referenced consistently in many of his films. With all of his accomplishments, it’s no wonder that he is revered as one of the prominent leaders in entertainment.

## Choose 4a or 4b Below

## 4a. Correct Your Own Writing

Collect some of your graded work. Find and write down examples of misplaced and dangling modifiers. Then correct them:

| Write your sentences. |
| --- |
| 1. |
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| 2. |
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| 3. |
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| 4. |
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**If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (4b).**

## 4b. Sentence Correction

Circle the dangling (D) or misplaced (M) modifier in each of the following sentences. Identify the type of modifier by writing D or M in the blank to the left. Rewrite each sentence on a separate sheet of paper.

| D or M | Sentence |
| --- | --- |
|  | 1. Jones only teaches at a university. |
|  | 1. Using a whip, precarious situations are avoided by Indiana Jones. |
|  | 1. When Jones and his father were held captive in a castle, the entire library was almost |
|  | destroyed in fire. |
|  | 1. Crawling through the Mayan tomb, several wall paintings were visible. |
|  | 1. Dangling helplessly from the suspension bridge, the crocodiles snapped their jaws in |
|  | hopeful anticipation of human flesh. |
|  | 1. The student asked to see Dr. Jones with a confused look. |
|  | 1. Indian told Marion to quietly move away from the snake. |
|  | 1. They descended into the ancient cavern in search of the fabled Ark of the Covenant full |
|  | of snakes. |
|  | 1. After falling into a pit of snakes as a child, an intense fear of snakes is present. |
|  | 1. Jones’ father sent his grail diary to Indiana in a pickle. |

## 5. Review the DLA

Go to https://mtsac2.mywconline.com and use the [Mt. SAC Writing Center Appointment System](https://mtsac2.mywconline.com/) to make a DLA appointment, or sign-up to see a tutor on the “**Walk-in**” list in the Writing Center. During your session with a tutor, explain your understanding of misplaced and dangling modifiers. Consider the main concept you learned in this DLA. Explain to the tutor strategies that you used to identify and correct this error.

Student’s Signature:

Tutor’s Signature

Date:

Date:

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