

The Writing Center

DLA: Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

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Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

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 DLA quiz. You must score at least 75% on the quiz before meeting with a specialist. After you complete the task, please take a screenshot of the page that has your score and show it to your specialist. Do not exit the quiz until you take the screenshot

2. Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers Review

What is the difference between misplaced and dangling modifiers?

3. Paragraph Correction

Read about Steven Spielberg, director of Indiana Jones, and 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:

1.

2.

3.

4.

If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (4b).

4b. Sentence Correction

Highlight the dangling (D) or misplaced (M) modifier in each of the following sentences. Identify the type of modifier by writing D or M, and then rewrite each sentence.

1. Jones only teaches at a university.
2. Using a whip, precarious situations are avoided by Indiana Jones.
3. When Jones and his father were held captive in a castle, the entire library was almost destroyed in fire.
4. Crawling through the Mayan tomb, several wall paintings were visible.
5. Dangling helplessly from the suspension bridge, the crocodiles snapped their jaws in hopeful anticipation of human flesh.

6. The student asked to see Dr. Jones with a confused look.
7. Indian told Marion to quietly move away from the snake.
8. They descended into the ancient cavern in search of the fabled Ark of the Covenant full of snakes.
9. After falling into a pit of snakes as a child, an intense fear of snakes is present.
10. Jones' father sent his grail diary to Indiana in a pickle.

5. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center's website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

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