MODIFIERS

Modifiers	Modifiers are **words, phrases,** and **clauses that describe or make clear the word or word group** to which the modifiers are linked. Therefore, you must place modifiers very carefully and make sure there is a specific word or words to which the modifier can be linked.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

In most cases, place the modifier as closely as possible to the word(s) it modifies.

Misplaced:	While the boys were at the mall, they **nearly** spent all their money.
Properly placed:	While the boys were at the mall, they spent **nearly** all their money.

Misplaced:	Marilyn took her puppy to the veterinarian **with fleas in his ears.**
Properly placed:	Marilyn took her puppy **with fleas in his ears** to the veterinarian.

Misplaced:	Cathy wore diamond rings on her fingers **which she had bought in New York.**
Properly placed:	On her fingers, Cathy wore diamond rings **which she had bought in New York.**

Make sure a modifier is not placed so that it could modify both what comes before it and what comes after it. Such modification errors are called <u>squinting modifiers.</u>

Misplaced:	Scott decided **on his way home** to walk through the park.
Properly placed:	**On his way home**, Scott decided to walk through the park.
Properly placed:	Scott decided to walk through the park **on his way home.**

Hint: Because some modification errors are very subtle, read sentences carefully for possible misunderstanding.

DANGLING MODIFIERS

Dangling modifiers	A modifier dangles when its subject is missing. A modifier always needs a subject and will attach itself to a false one if the true one is not in the sentence.

An example of a dangling modifier:

Playing safe, the ball was thrown to third base.

This sentence seems to say that a ball was playing safe. Since **Playing safe** is a modifier, we expect to see its subject immediately after it, to find out who was playing safe. Instead, what turns up in the subject position is the ball, and there is nothing else in the sentence that could be playing safe. The opening phrase, therefore, is a **dangling modifier**. It has nothing to support it.

More examples of dangling modifiers:

Incorrect:	Trying to hail a taxicab, her heel broke.
Correct:	While she was trying to hail a taxicab, her heel broke.

Incorrect:	Washing her hair, her dog gave birth to six puppies.
Correct:	While she was washing her hair, her dog gave birth to six puppies.