



Modifiers

Definition: A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes, limits, or qualifies another word in a sentence. Modifiers give additional detail about the subject discussed in a sentence.

When to use modifiers:

1. A modifier should be placed close to the word it modifies.

Ex: Wendy watched the sky, **clear** and **beautiful**. (clear and beautiful modifies sky)

Ex: John lifted the **heavy** box, **containing bricks**. (heavy and containing bricks modifies box)

Ex: Colleen made a **cold** soup, **green** and **slimy**. (cold, green, and slimy modifies soup)

2. Use limiting modifiers. They should immediately precede the words they modify. Different placements can change the meaning of the sentence.

Common limiting modifiers: *almost, only, even, hardly, just, merely, nearly, exactly, scarcely, simply, and so on...*

Ex: **Just** Michelle set up camp at the lake. (She did it alone.)

Ex: Michelle **just** set up camp at the lake. (She did it just now.)

Ex: Michelle set up camp **just** at the lake. (She only did it at the lake.)

3. Modifiers can play the role of adjectives and adverbs.

Adjective modifiers: When a modifier is an adjective, it modifies a noun or a pronoun.

Ex: The **colorful** and **detailed** *butterflies* were mesmerizing.

Ex: The **scared** *dog* could not find his way home.

Ex: Marelllo did not want to write the **long** *report*.

Adverb modifiers: When a modifier is an adverb, it modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

Ex: Their **lavish** *home* was one that they **constantly** *bragged* about.

Ex: The shutters and the blinds were **intricately** *decorated*.

Ex: The wrestling team lost the **incredibly** *brutal game*.

4. A modifier can be a phrase or clause.

Ex: Tiffany found a *rock* **shinier than a pearl**. (The phrase "shinier than a pearl" modifies the noun "rock".)

Ex: **When we left her alone**, Amy *cleaned* the house until it was spotless. (The phrase "when we left her alone" modifies the verb "cleaned".)

When not to use modifiers:

1. Don't misplace modifiers. A misplaced modifier is a word or word group whose placement suggest that it modifies one word when it is intended to modify another.

Ex: They served tacos to the children on paper plates. (Incorrect-"on paper plates" is misplaced. It modifies "the children".)

They served tacos on paper plates to the children. (Correct-"on paper plates" now modifies tacos)

Ex: With an IQ of just 50, the lawyer argued that her client should not receive such a harsh sentence. (Incorrect-Does the lawyer have an IQ of 50?)

The lawyer argued that her client, with an IQ of just 50, should not receive such a harsh sentence. (Correct)

2. Avoid dangling modifiers; they are words or phrases that cannot logically modify any word in the sentence.

Ex: Using this medicine, many undesirable side effects are experienced. (Incorrect. Who is using the medicine? In order to correct this, supply a subject that "using this medicine" can modify.

Using this medicine, *patients* experience many undesirable side effects. (Correct.)

3. Avoid squinting modifiers; they occur when a limiting modifier is placed so that it is not clear whether it modifies a word before it or a word after it.

Ex: The life that everyone thought would fulfill her totally bored her.
(Incorrect. Is *totally* modifying *fulfill* or *bored*?)

The life that everyone thought would totally fulfill her bored her.
(Correct. She was expected to be totally fulfilled.)

The life that everyone thought would fulfill her bored her totally.
(Correct. She was totally bored.)

YouTube Links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDcu0ueCkGk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHWyN1xGFdc>

Online Resources:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/597/01/>

http://www.grammar-monster.com/glossary/modifiers_modify.htm

<http://www.towson.edu/ows/dangmod.htm>