Sentence modifiers pdf

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Didn't find what you need? Search our website or email us. A modifier is a word/phrase/clause which modifies other words in a sentence. To be specific, a modifier is either an adjective or an adverb. The adjectives modify the nouns, and the adverbs modify the verbs or the adjectives or the other adverbs. See the details of adjectives and adverbs. Example: Alex bought a chocolate cake yesterday. (Here, ‘a’ is an article which modifies the word ‘cake’ and the word ‘chocolate’ is the direct adjective of the word ‘cake’. So both the words ‘a’ and ‘chocolate’ are adjectives which modify the noun ‘cake’. The word ‘yesterday’ announces the time of the action, i.e., the verb ‘bought’. So it is an adverb which modifies the verb.) Murphy, the president’s daughter, is very sick. (Here, the phrase ‘president’s daughter’ modifies the noun ‘Murphy’. In this phrase, ‘the president’s’ modifies the noun ‘daughter’ but the whole phrase itself becomes an adjective when it modifies the noun ‘Murphy’. There is another adjective ‘sick’ which is modified by the adverb ‘very’.) The brown(adjective) dog was barking at me aggressively(adverb). Generally, modifiers are of two types according to their position to the words they modify: Pre-modifiers Post-modifiers Pre-modifiers: Pre-modifiers are the modifiers which modify the words that follow them in the sentence. Conventionally the adjectives are usually placed before the nouns. So, most of the adjectives are pre-modifiers. Adverbs are often placed before the words they modify. Articles, determiners, demonstratives, proper adjectives, descriptive adjectives, compound adjectives, participles, etc. are the adjectives which come before the nouns and modify them. Conjunctive adverbs, sentence adverbs, and some other adverbs can work being placed before the verbs/adjectives/other adverbs. Example: Generally(adverb) the(article) brown(descriptive adjective) dogs are nice. Apparently(adverb), that(demonstrative) bank has a lot of(determiners) security(adjective) porcess. Give me that(demonstrative) black(descriptive adjective) covered(past participle) shining(present participle) box. (In the above sentence the noun ‘box’ has four pre-modifiers [adjectives].) Post-modifiers Post-modifiers are the modifiers which come after the words they modify. Customarily, the adverbs come after the verbs and modify them. However, some adjectives also come after the nouns and modify them. Most of the adverbs of time, adverbs of manner, adverbs of place/direction usually come after the verbs they modify. Appositives, prepositional phrases (adjectives/adverbs), infinitives (adverbs/adjectives), dependent clause, etc. usually come after the nouns they modify. Example: Jason Roy, a cricketer,(appositive) has been selected in the squad(adverb). Stark, our teacher, (appositive) gives us tasks to do(infinitive - adjective) in the class(adverb of place). Ronaldo, the captain of Portugal team,(appositive) plays exceptionally(adverb of manner) well. You have a certain amount of freedom in deciding where to place your modifiers in a sentence:We rowed the boat vigorously.We vigorously rowed the boat.Vigorously we rowed the boat.However, you must be careful to avoid misplaced modifiers -- modifiers that are positioned so that they appear to modify the wrong thing.In fact, you can improve your writing quite a bit by paying attention to basic problems like misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.Misplaced WordsIn general, you should place single-word modifiers near the word or words they modify, especially when a reader might think that they modify something different in the sentence. Consider the following sentence:[WRONG] After our conversation lessons, we could understand the Spanish spoken by our visitors from Madrid easily.Do we understand the Spanish easily, or do the visitors speak it easily? This revision eliminates the confusion:[RIGHT] We could easily understand the Spanish spoken by our visitors from Madrid.It is particularly important to be careful about where you put limiting modifiers. These are words like "almost," "hardly," "nearly," "just," "only," "merely," and so on. Many writers regularly misplace these modifiers. You can accidentally change the entire meaning of a sentence if you place these modifiers next to the wrong word:[WRONG] Randy has nearly annoyed every professor he has had. (he hasn't "nearly annoyed" them)[WRONG] We almost ate all of the Thanksgiving turkey. (we didn't "almost eat" it)[RIGHT] Randy has annoyed nearly every professor he has had.[RIGHT] We ate almost all of the Thanksgiving turkey.Misplaced Phrases and ClausesIt is important that you place the modifying phrase or clause as close as possible to the word or words it modifies:[WRONG] By accident, he poked the little girl with his finger in the eye.[WRONG] I heard that my roommate intended to throw a surprise party for me while I was outside her bedroom window.[WRONG] After the wedding, Ian told us at his stag party that he would start behaving like a responsible adult.[RIGHT] By accident, he poked the little girl in the eye with his finger.[RIGHT] While I was outside her bedroom window, I heard that my roommate intended to throw a surprise party for me.[RIGHT] Ian told us at his stag party that he would start behaving like a responsible adult after the wedding.Squinting ModifiersA squinting modifier is an ambiguously placed modifier that can modify either the word before it or the word after it. In other words, it is "squinting" in both directions at the same time:[WRONG] Defining your terms clearly strengthens your argument. (does defining "clearly strengthen" or does "defining clearly" strengthen?)[RIGHT] Defining your terms will clearly strengthen your argument. OR A clear definition of your terms strengthens your argument.Split InfinitivesThe infinitive form of the verb consists of the word "to" followed by the base form of the verb: "to be," "to serve," "to chop," etc. Inserting a word or words between the "to" and the verb of an infinitive creates what is known as a split infinitive. Prescriptive grammarians, who knew Latin grammar better than English, once decreed that a split infinitive was an error, but now it is growing increasingly acceptable even in formal writing. Nevertheless, some careful writers still prefer to avoid splitting infinitives altogether.In general, you should avoid placing long, disruptive modifiers between the "to" and the verb of an infinitive. However, you must use your judgement when it comes to single-word modifiers. Sometimes a sentence becomes awkward if a single-word modifier is placed anywhere but between the elements of the infinitive:[WRONG] The marketing team voted to, before they launched the new software, run an anticipatory ad campaign. (disruptive -- the infinitive should not be split)[RIGHT] The marketing team voted to run an anticipatory ad campaign before they launched the new software.Dangling ModifiersThe dangling modifier, a persistent and frequent grammatical problem in writing, is often (though not always) located at the beginning of a sentence. A dangling modifier is usually a phrase or an elliptical clause -- a dependent clause whose subject and verb are implied rather than expressed -- that functions as an adjective but does not modify any specific word in the sentence, or (worse) modifies the wrong word. Consider the following example:Raised in Nova Scotia, it is natural to miss the smell of the sea.The introductory phrase in the above sentence looks as if it is meant to modify a person or persons, but no one is mentioned in the sentence. Such introductory adjective phrases, because of their position, automatically modify the first noun or pronoun that follows the phrase -- in this case, "it." The connection in this case is illogical because "it" was not raised in Nova Scotia. You could revise the sentence in a number of ways:For a person raised in Nova Scotia, it is natural to miss the smell of the sea. (the phrase no longer functions as an adjective)Raised in Nova Scotia, I often miss the smell of the sea. (the phrase functions as an adjective but now automatically modifies "I," a logical connection)A dangling modifier can also appear when you place an elliptical clause improperly:Although nearly finished, we left the play early because we were worried about our sick cat.The way this sentence is structured, the clause "Although nearly finished" illogically modifies "we," the pronoun directly following the clause. An easy way to rectify the problem is to re-insert the subject and verb that are understood in the elliptical clause:Although the play was nearly finished, we left early because we were worried about our sick cat.Written by Frances Peck The sentence modifier slot holds constructions that modify the remainder of the sentence, much as pre- and post-modifiers modify a central noun in a noun phrase. pre-modifier ××× noun ×××× post-modifier ×× × ××× × ××××××××× * ××××××××× × ×××× SENTENCE MODIFIER] subject + predicate ×× [SENTENCE MODIFIER We shall mark front and end sentence modifiers with the notation front modifier] ..... [end modifier Recall the second model sentence from the set of three at the introduction to this section: 2. ×× The boy ate the apple [×× in the summer. Here the final phrase, in the summer , modifies the earlier sentence as a whole. It indicates when the boy at the apple. What proof do we have that this last phrase really modifiers the remainder of the sentence as a whole? The proof lies in the fact that the main portion can stand alone as a simple sentence, and The boy ate the apple. the modifier portion of the sentence can be shifted between the front and back without essentially changing the meaning. (Emphasis may change slightly, and there is a stylistic convention of putting short sentence modifiers first.) ××××××××××××××××××××××××××× ×××××× The boy ate the apple ×××××× ×× in the summer . ××××××××××××× × In the summer ×××××× the boy ate the apple. There are, in effect, front and end "slots" that can be filled with comments on the remainder of the sentence. You can, with little trouble imagine all sorts of comments that might be inserted into the sentence modifier slots at the front and end of the sentence. _____] the boy ate the apple ×× [_____ Note that in the test for a sentence modifier does not work with the other two of the three sample sentences: 1. * In the pie. the boy ate the apple. 3. * In a hurry the boy ate the apple. Here the sentences are clearly incorrect, or at least awkward. We will explain what is happening in the final model sentence in a moment. Any slot in a sentence can be described in terms of the position of that slot, the constructions that can fill that slot, and the meaning imparted by construction within that slot. Sentence modifier slots can be filled by anything from a single word, Yesterday, × × to long phrases. Whenever it rains, × After the game was over and we had lost our third game... Because it would be senseless any other way... Sentence modifiers typically qualify (in what way, under what conditions), limit, or set conditions or circumstances (for whom, why, when, where), or indicated reasons or conclusions. Sentence modifiers generally take a comma when they appear at the front of a sentence and are more than a single word. No comma ever appears before a sentence modifier in the end position. ×× SENTENCE MODIFIER] , _____ ×× [SENTENCE MODIFIER ××××××××××××××××××××××××××××××××× × The comma brackets off the front sentence modifier. Stylistically, shorter constructions appear early, and after a comma; longer ones appear at the end. Some basic tactics and strategies for reading and writing should be apparent. You can make better sense of long and complicated sentence by attempting to recognize sentence modifiers. If a sentence begins with a word like whenever , after , because, or in , the odds are you have a sentence modifier in the front slot. ×× If a sentence begins with the, a, every, or my , that is, with any of the words that commonly begin noun phrases, the odds are that there is no sentence modifier in the front position. ×× But there may still be one in the end position. As a writer, you can shape your thoughts more carefully and specifically by adding sentence modifiers. ×× When or where is this true? ×× Why is this the case? ×× Under what circumstances does the remark apply? Amendment II, U. S. Constitution A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed. How should we understand this amendment? Is the right to bear arms a right designed only to assure a well regulated militia, or a broader right? ×× To Charlton Heston, President of the National Rifle Association, the answer is clear: The Founders' intent in framing the Second Amendment is perfectly clear and undeniable. Thomas Jefferson wrote, "No man shall ever be debarred the use of arms." .... Some anti-gun elitists declare this notion outdated. However, many constitutional scholars from this country's most prestigious universities agree that the Founders' intent is clear and irreversible: To "keep and bear arms" is a right for all law-abiding citizens. (2) To William H. Dunlop, the situation is quite different: The words "Second Amendment" and "keep and bear arms" will be bandied about ad infinitum, but just as in the N.R.A.s ads, the full amendment will never be seen or heard. Why not? Because the first half of the amendment's "well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State" clearly limits the meaning of the second half, 'the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." (3) Or, in the words of novelist and journalist Pete Hamill, To most literate people, this sentence [the amendment] obviously connects the right to keep and bear arms to the existence of a well-regulated militia. The words seem to say what they do say. That is, the right to keep and bear arms is essential to the existence of a well-regulated militia. (4) This is not the only instance in which a "constitutional comma" matters. During early negotiations the Constitutional Convention of 1787 agreed to include: The Legislature of the United States shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises. The sentence was later extended to indicate how this money was to be spent ×××× × The Legislature of the United States shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare. In the final version a comma was changed to a semicolon. The Legislature of the United States shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises ; to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare.

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