A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes another word or group of words. The most frequent mistakes that occur with modifiers are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.

**Misplaced Modifiers**

A modifier that is placed too far away from the word it describes is called a **misplaced modifier**. Modifiers should be placed as close as possible to the word or words they describe in order to avoid confusion and ensure clarity. There are three simple steps to correct a misplaced modifier:

**Step 1:** Find the modifier.
**Step 2:** Identify what word the modifier was intended to modify.
**Step 3:** Place the modifier as close as possible to the word, phrase, or clause it is supposed to describe.

**Incorrect:** The store sold inflatable children’s toys.

**Step 1:** The modifier is *inflatable*.
**Step 2:** The modifier, *inflatable*, is closest to the word *children*. Thus, the sentence reads as though the children are inflatable, instead of the toys.
**Step 3:** In order to correct the misplaced modifier, *toys* and *inflatable* must be moved closer together.

**Correct:** The store sold inflatable toys for children.

**Dangling Modifiers**

A **dangling modifier** is a modifier that lacks a word or group of words to modify. Usually, a dangling modifier is found near the beginning of the sentence and starts with either a *verb + ing* or a *to + verb* phrase. There are three simple steps to correct a dangling modifier:

**Step 1:** Find the modifier.
**Step 2:** Decide what word the modifier was intended to modify.
**Step 3:** Revise the sentence. To correct a dangling modifier, you cannot simply rearrange the sentence. You must add the word that the dangling modifier describes.

**Incorrect:** To win the race, great speed will be needed.

**Step 1:** The modifier is *to win the race*.
**Step 2:** The modifier, *to win the race*, is not describing anything.
**Step 3:** To find the appropriate subject of the sentence, it is helpful to ask, “Who will need great speed to win the race?” or “What is the modifier referring to?”

**Correct:** To win the race, I will need great speed.