

MODIFIERS, COMPARATIVES and PARALLELISM

MISPLACED MODIFIERS RULE: Modifying words or phrases must be next to the words they modify.

Moving the modifier(s) next to the word (s) they modify clarifies the meaning of the sentence.

I *only* saw Elena. (I did not speak to her.)

Only I saw Elena. (No one else saw her.)

I saw *only* Elena. (I saw no one else.)

Example: Recording their activity on tape, the penguins' habits were studied. (incorrect)
 Recording their activity on tape, *the scientists* studied the penguins' habits. (correct)

Exercises: Circle the group of words you need to move and draw an arrow to its correct place in the sentence.

1. Waddling on the shore, the biologists studied the sea lions.
2. Jose stopped and parked the bike looking at the photo.
3. Nesting in the tree, I saw a bird.
4. He saw the antique store walking up the street.
5. At the age of five, my mother took me to the zoo.

DANGLING MODIFIERS RULE: All modifiers must be clearly connected to the noun that is being modified.

The sentences that have "dangling modifiers" will need extra words added, in order to increase clarity.

Example: Looking closely, no man could be seen. (incorrect)
 Looking closely, *he* could see no man. (correct)

Exercises: Add in necessary words to correct the dangling modifier.

1. After eating the appetizer, dinner was served. _____
2. Running out of the house, the keys were grabbed. _____
3. To play well, proper equipment is needed. _____
4. To play in the band, music must be studied. _____
5. After moving to Hollywood, Clark's dream was fulfilled. _____

PARALLELISM: Parallel structure is essential when **listing things** and when **comparing or contrasting things** in a sentence. Though sometimes achieving parallel structure feels a bit wordy, it is required in order for the sentence to be grammatically correct.

Example: List-She likes running, biking and to swim. (incorrect)
 She likes to run, to bike and to swim. **OR** She likes running, biking and swimming. (correct)

Comparison- The girls baked the cake, but the pans were cleaned by the boys. (incorrect)
 The girls baked the cake, but the boys cleaned the pans. (correct)
 The cakes were baked by the girls, but the pans were cleaned by the boys. (correct)

Exercises: Cross out the part of the sentence that is not in parallel structure and re-write it correctly.

1. The patient had a cut eye, two broken fingers and a knee that had been bruised. _____
2. The weather report predicted heavy rain, persistent thunder, possibly it would hail. _____
3. Twice as many lions inhabit the Kenyan plains as live on the Tanzanian plains. _____
4. Before taking the exam, we studied hard, read the chapters and got lots of sleep. _____
5. The home team wore red jerseys while blue jerseys were worn by the away team. _____

COMPARISONS: When comparing or contrasting **two things** you can either use the word **MORE** or an **ER** ending. When comparing or contrasting **three or more things**, you can either use the word **MOST** or an **EST** ending.

Example: Between New York and Chicago, New York is the largest and Chicago is the coldest. (incorrect)
 Between New York and Chicago, New York is the larger and Chicago is the colder. (correct)

 Of all the girls in class, Stephanie is the taller. (incorrect)
 Of all the girls in class, Stephanie is the tallest. (correct)

Also, the SAT sometimes uses comparisons that do not work. One must always compare people to people, things to things, the like to the like.

Example: Pablo Picasso's paintings were more shocking than Joan Miro. (incorrect)
 Pablo Picasso's paintings were more shocking than *those of* Joan Miro. (correct)

 Unlike wasps, the number of bees in a nest is too large to count. (incorrect)
 Unlike *the number of* wasps, the number of bees in a nest is too large to count. (correct)

Exercises: Correct the comparison in each sentence.

1. In the Bloomsbury set, the poems of Ezra Pound were more widely read than T.S. Eliot.

2. Of the two birds in the forest, the parrot is known as the most colorful and the cockatoo is the loudest.

3. The length of the snake was longer than the eel.

4. The film was shot in Canada and not the United States, as many believed.

5. Of all the coaches in history, only Don Shula has the more victories.

6. Among Kim, Victoria and Alex, Kim was the more hungry.
