

Dangling Modifiers

A modifier describes, clarifies, or gives more detail about a concept.

A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence.

One way to identify a dangling modifier is to check if the verb is referring to the correct subject (the subject of the sentence is usually written at/near the beginning of the Independent Clause).

To fix a dangling modifier, make sure the subject and verb match. Also try to write in Active Voice by starting with the person doing the action followed by the verb indicating that action.

INCORRECT:

Forgetting his name, it was difficult for Sarah to introduce him.

CORRECT:

Forgetting his name, Sarah found it difficult to introduce him.

Because Sarah forgot his name, it was difficult to introduce him.

Sarah found it difficult to introduce him because she forgot his name.

It was difficult for Sarah to introduce him because she forgot his name.

Chris found the book he wanted walking through the bookstore.

Walking through the bookstore, Chris found the book he wanted.

Michelle walked her dog talking on a cell phone.

Talking on her cell phone, Michelle walked her dog.

Having finished the assignment, the TV was turned on.

Having finished the assignment, Mike turned on the TV.

After reading the great new book, the movie based on it is sure to be exciting.

After reading the great new book, Carly thought the movie based on it was sure to be exciting.

Hoping to excuse my lateness, the note was written and given to my teacher.

Hoping to excuse my lateness, I wrote a note and gave it to my teacher.

To improve his results, the experiment was done again.

He improved his results by doing the experiment again.

Relieved of your responsibilities at your job, your home should be a place to relax.

Relieved of your responsibilities at your job, you should be able to relax at home.

Dangling modifiers can occasionally involve a subject and its adjective. When incorrect, these are usually already written in active voice, but the adjective is not referring to the correct subject.

Impressive in size and beauty, people have admired the Grand Canyon for centuries.

Impressive in size and beauty, the Grand Canyon has been admired by people for centuries.

Terrifying to watch, Mindy covered her eyes during the horror movie.

Mindy covered her eyes during the horror movie because it was terrifying to watch.

Interesting because of its relevance, Jeremy turned up the volume on the podcast.

Jeremy, finding the podcast interesting because of its relevance, turned up the volume.