Modifiers, whether words or word groups, are supposed to make writing clearer. For example, to clarify the word *dog*, a writer might use the modifier *brown*. Word groups can also act as modifiers: Brown is the color that I like best. *That I like best* is modifying the color by providing additional information.

**Dangling Modifiers**

A dangling modifier is a phrase or a clause that is not clearly attached to any word in the sentence.

*Dangling: Playing soccer, a dog walked by.*

It is fairly obvious that a dog was not walking by playing soccer. Playing soccer should refer to a subject that is doing the action, but it does not; the subject is not in the sentence at all. To clarify the sentence, make sure the modifying phrase attaches to a specific subject.

**Correct: While Dan and Grandpa played soccer, a dog walked by.**

*Playing soccer, Dan and Grandpa watched a dog walk by.*

Here is another example.

*Dangling: While speeding down the road, the tire went flat.*

This example would suggest that the tires of the car were speeding down the road. The modifier *while speeding down the road* is missing its real subject.

**Correct: While I was speeding down the road, the tire went flat.**

**Misplaced Modifiers**

As a result of being placed in the wrong part of a sentence, some modifiers attach themselves to the wrong subject.

*Misplaced: Having flown out of the nest, the girl couldn’t find the bird.*

The girl didn’t fly out of the nest—the bird did. Because *the girl* immediately follows the modifying phrase *having left the nest in the tree*, the modifying phrase naturally attached itself to *the girl*. In order to clarify what exactly is leaving the nest, rewrite the sentence and place the modifier next to what it is modifying.

**Correct: The girl couldn’t find the bird because it had flown out of the nest.**

Here is another example.

*Misplaced: The car was advertised in yesterday’s paper that is only two years old and is in excellent condition.*

In this example it is the car that is only two years old, not the paper, but the modifier is misplaced.

**Correct: The car, which is only two years old and is in excellent condition, was advertised in yesterday’s paper.**