Q: What is a modifier?

A: a word or phrase that qualifies (modifies) a word, phrase or clause

Types:
- adjectives (modify nouns and pronouns) (for example: the RED house)
- adverbs (modify verbs) (for example: he ran QUICKLY)
- modifier phrases (modify an action or an actor) (LOOKING AT THE CLOCK, he noticed that he was late)

Q: What is a misplaced modifier?

A: a misplaced modifier is a word or word group whose placement suggests that it modifies one word or phrase when it is intended to modify another.

Misplaced Modifiers

i. More beautiful than any human being, the explorer noticed the mermaid.

ii. Wild and untamed, Jack entered the jungle.

iii. Moaning in haunting voices, the house contained many ghosts.

Q: How do I fix it?

A: Revise the sentence, taking care to put modifying words, phrases, and clauses in a position that clearly identifies the headword and that does not awkwardly interrupt a sentence. HINT: Usually, you can just expand the main clause.

Examples:

Incorrect: More beautiful than any human being, the explorer noticed the mermaid.

Correct: The explorer noticed the mermaid, which was more beautiful than any human being.

Examples:

Incorrect: Wild and untamed, Jack entered the jungle.

Correct: Jack entered the wild and untamed jungle.

Examples:

Incorrect: Moaning in haunting voices, the house contained many ghosts.

Correct: The house contained many ghosts that moaned in haunting voices.

Q: What is a dangling modifier?

A: A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that cannot logically describe, limit, or restrict any word or word group in the sentence.

Dangling Modifiers

i.   Using a variety of pedagogical techniques, the students were taught grammar.

ii. To improve his essay, each page was proofread.

iii. While reading the novel, the pages that contain important information should be marked.

Q: How do I fix it?

A: Add a word or word group that the dangling modifier can logically modify.

HINT: You must usually change the subject of the main clause.

Examples:

Incorrect: Using a variety of pedagogical techniques, the students were taught grammar.

Correct: Using a variety of pedagogical techniques, the teacher taught the students grammar.

Example:

Incorrect: To improve his essay, each page was proofread.

Correct: To improve his essay, David proofread each page.

Examples:

Incorrect: While reading the novel, the pages that contain important information should be marked.

Correct: While reading the novel, you should mark the pages that contain important information.