MISPLACED MODIFIERS

INTRODUCTORY PROJECT

Because of misplaced words, each of the sentences below has more than one possible meaning. In each case, see if you can explain both the intended meaning and the unintended meaning.

1. The children attended the public school wearing uniforms.
   Intended meaning: ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   Unintended meaning: ____________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

2. The parents attended a conference with one of the teachers who had a problem child.
   Intended meaning: ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________
   Unintended meaning: ____________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

WHAT MISPLACED MODIFIERS ARE AND HOW TO CORRECT THEM

Misplaced modifiers are words that, because of their awkward placement, do not describe the words the writer intended them to describe. Misplaced modifiers often confuse the meaning of a sentence. To avoid them, place words as close as possible to words that they describe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Misplaced Words</th>
<th>Correctly Placed Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The students could not see the blackboard <em>sitting in the back of the class</em>. (The <em>blackboard</em> was sitting in the back of the class?)</td>
<td>Sitting in the back of the class, the students could not see the blackboard. (The intended meaning – that the blackboard was not visible from the back of the class – is now clear.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The students watched a movie after taking their test, <em>which was too violent for minors</em>. (The <em>test</em> was too violent for minors?)</td>
<td>After taking their test, the students watched a movie, which was too violent for minors. (The intended meaning – that the movie was violent – is now clear.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The classroom <em>almost</em> contained fifty students. (The classroom <em>almost contained</em> fifty students, but in fact it did not contain anything?)</td>
<td>The classroom contained almost fifty students. (The intended meaning – that the classroom contained a little under fifty students – is now clear.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other single-word modifiers to watch out for include *only*, *even*, *hardly*, *nearly*, and *often*. Such words should be placed immediately before the word they modify.

**PRACTICE**

Underline the misplaced word or words in each sentence. Then rewrite the sentence, placing related words together and thereby making the meaning clear.

**Example**

The parents sent their teenage child to the new school *that was failing*.

*The parents sent their teenage child that was failing to the new school.*

1. We observed a class of ESL students taking a tour of the school.

2. The young girl envisioned the math test that she would take in her mind.

3. The teacher watched the students take the test from her desk.

4. Shao Ping carried his old school book in his bag which was wrapped in newspaper.

5. I heard that the local preschool would be closed on the evening news.

6. Student athletes almost filled the entire gymnasium.

7. The ESL students were given the grammar test making groans of discontent.

8. The boy confidently completed the math problem with a smile.

9. Haji delivered his late homework to his teacher dressed in old, torn clothing.

10. The principal needs new teachers to help the students badly.
APPLICATION

Now, proofread your most recent essay (Analysis Essay 1) for misplaced modifiers. If you find errors, enter up to five sentences that contain the errors on the lines below. Highlight each misplaced modifier. Afterwards, correct each sentence.

1. Error: _____________________________________________________________
   Correction: __________________________________________________________

2. Error: _____________________________________________________________
   Correction: __________________________________________________________

3. Error: _____________________________________________________________
   Correction: __________________________________________________________

4. Error: _____________________________________________________________
   Correction: __________________________________________________________

5. Error: _____________________________________________________________
   Correction: __________________________________________________________

If you have no misplaced modifiers in your most recent essay, then find five (5) examples of correct modifier usage from the current textbook reading, write the sentences on the lines below, and highlight the modifiers.

1. _________________________________________________________________

2. _________________________________________________________________

3. _________________________________________________________________

4. _________________________________________________________________

5. _________________________________________________________________
MISPLACED MODIFIERS

INTRODUCTORY PROJECT

1. The children attended the public school wearing uniforms.
   Intended meaning: _The children are wearing uniforms._
   Unintended meaning: _The school is wearing uniforms._

2. The parents attended a conference with one of the teachers who had a problem child.
   Intended meaning: _The parents had a problem child._
   Unintended meaning: _The teacher had a problem child._

PRACTICE

Underline the misplaced word or words in each sentence. Then rewrite the sentence, placing related words together and thereby making the meaning clear.

Example

_The parents sent their teenage child to the new school that was failing._
_The parents sent their teenage child that was failing to the new school._

1. We observed a class of ESL students taking a tour of the school.
   While taking a tour of the school, we observed a class of ESL students.

2. The young girl envisioned the math test that she would take in her mind.
   The young girl envisioned in her mind the math test that she would take.

3. The teacher watched the students take the test from her desk.
   From her desk, the teacher watched the students take the test.

4. Shao Ping carried his old school book in his bag which was wrapped in newspaper.
   Shao Ping carried his old school book, which was wrapped in newspaper, in his bag.

5. I heard that the local preschool would be closed on the evening news.
   I heard on the evening news that the local preschool would be closed.

6. Student athletes _almost_ filled the entire gymnasium.
   Student athletes filled almost the entire gymnasium.

7. The ESL students were given the grammar test making groans of discontent.
   Making groans of discontent, the ESL students were given the grammar test.

8. The boy confidently completed the math problem with a smile.
   With a smile, the boy confidently completed the math problem.

9. Haji delivered his late homework to his teacher dressed in old, torn clothing.
   Dressed in old, torn clothing, Haji delivered his late homework to his teacher.

10. The principal needs new teachers to help the students _badly._
    The principal badly needs new teachers to help the students.