

**5202 GRAMMAR (Übung; ECTS 3) – Winter Semester 2003-04**  
 Tuesdays 16-18 in A3, Wednesdays 8-10 in C29

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### Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

A modifier should be placed as close as possible to the word it modifies. Often prepositional phrases, verbal phrases or adjective clauses are too far away from the word they are meant to modify.

**Misplaced Modifiers:** A misplaced modifier appears to modify the wrong word in a sentence. They often distort the meaning of the sentence or make it impossible for the reader to understand the meaning. To correct misplaced modifiers, move it closer to the word it modifies.

- *Slithering through the wet grass*, we watched the garden snake.
  - o "we" are doing the slithering here, not the snake
- We watched the garden snake *slithering through the wet grass*.

**Dangling Modifiers:** A dangling modifier appears to modify either the wrong word or no word at all because the word it should logically modify is missing from the sentence. To correct a dangling modifier, add the missing word and rewrite the rest of the sentence as necessary.

- *Pausing briefly to congratulate Barbara*, the conversation continued.
  - o the conversation paused to congratulate Barbara?
- *Pausing briefly to congratulate Barbara*, we continued the conversation.
- *Driving through the desert at night*, the cactuses looked eerie.
  - o Cactuses that can drive are eerie!
- *Driving through the desert at night*, we thought the cactuses looked eerie.
- *When he was three years old*, Jerry's uncle showed him how to fly a kite.
  - o Jerry's uncle is only three and already teaching his nephew?!
- *When Jerry was three years old*, his uncle showed him how to fly a kite.

**Recognizing Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers Exercise:** Each of the following sentences contains an underlined phrase or clause. Indicate whether the modifier is misplaced, dangling, or correct.

1. Flying over the countryside, the cars and houses looked like toys.
2. The messenger spoke to the receptionist who delivered the package.
3. The golfer made a hole-in-one with the green-and-white umbrella.
4. Without thinking what might be on the menu, Hugh told his hostess that he hated broccoli.
5. After studying hard, the test was a breeze.
6. With my small allowance, the tickets were too expensive.
7. The right belongs to every American to vote in elections.
8. The house was rebuilt by the new owners destroyed by the fire.
9. At camp, home seemed very far away.
10. After finishing the dishes, we were ready to relax for the evening.

Correcting Misplaced Modifiers Exercises: Rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers. Identify which word the phrase or clause is modifying.

1. A man leaped into the water over the ship's rail.
2. Smashed beyond repair, Rob saw his watch lying on the court.
3. A banana split was served to each guest, dripping with chocolate sauce.
4. Wilkings realized the mistake he had made a moment too late.
5. The boys were spoken to sharply about loitering in the principal's office.
6. We saved the scrap of meat for the dog that had been left on our plates.
7. Michelle bought an umbrella from a salesman with red and yellow panels.
8. The hunter crouched behind a tree waiting for a bear to come along with a bow and arrow.
9. We saw many picturesque plantation homes driving through the South.
10. Wilma kept her trophies in a bookcase that she had won in golf tournaments.

Correcting Dangling Modifiers Exercises: Rewrite the following sentences to correct the dangling modifiers. Identify which word the phrase or clause is modifying.

1. To get to town quickly, the highway is best.
2. While jogging one morning, the solution was suddenly obvious.
3. At the age of five, Paul's uncle took him to the circus.
4. Wandering aimlessly in the woods, the first sight of camp was welcome.
5. After hearing of the refugees' plight, emergency funds were made available.
6. Getting up much earlier than usual, the house seemed strangely quiet.
7. To receive the free booklet, a stamped, self-addressed envelope must be enclosed.
8. Absorbed in the puzzle, the time passed very quickly.
9. To keep up with the news, a daily paper is a must.
10. Sailing far out from shore, a squall suddenly arose.

Correcting Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers Exercise: Rewrite the following paragraph to correct any misplaced or dangling modifiers.

Stan is a successful architect and interior designer whose custom-built homes stagger the imagination. Priced beyond what the average person can afford, his unique inspiration can be seen in the house on the corner. The front of the house is made entirely of glass. Extended outward from the second floor, eight vertical steel pillars support a balcony. Within the center of the house, a huge tropical aquarium rests on a marble floor five feet in diameter. A wrought iron staircase winds its way around the aquarium connecting the first and second stories. Recessed in the ceilings, each room is softly lit by fluorescent lights. To enjoy music in any location, there is a dial on the wall next to the thermostat. In the winter, fireplaces provide warmth; in the summer, cool air is circulated by fans. By closing your eyes and dreaming, the house can become yours.