

THE MISPLACED MODIFIER

"I have the words already. What I am seeking is the perfect order of words in the sentence. You can see for yourself how many different ways they might be arranged." James Joyce

The grammar outlaw: The Misplaced Modifier

The grammar crime:

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers are phrases that are not located properly in relation to the words they modify.
- Misplaced modifiers lead to illogical sentences that are difficult to follow.

Question: How do we know if a sentence has a misplaced modifier?

Outlaw:	A small book sat on the desk that Sarah had read.
The modifier:	"that Sarah had read"
The Problem:	This modifier is misplaced because it modifies the desk. It sounds as if Sarah had read the desk.
Rehabilitated:	A small book that Sarah had read sat on the desk.

Question: How do we catch misplaced modifier outlaws?

- The two common types of modifier grammar errors are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.

1. Misplaced Modifiers

- The example above is a misplaced modifier.
- To rehabilitate this grammar error outlaw, rewrite the sentence so that you place any modifiers as close as possible to the words, phrases, or clauses they modify.

Outlaw:	The professor posted the notes for the students covered in class.
The Problem:	The modifier, "covered in class," appears to modify "the students." Because the students are not covered in class, this is a misplaced modifier.
Rehabilitated:	The professor posted the notes covered in class for the students.

2. Dangling Modifiers

- occur with -ing modifiers
- Modifiers dangle when they are not logically connected to the main part of the sentence.

- To rehabilitate these grammar outlaws, either:
 1. State the subject right after the dangling modifier, or
 2. Add the subject to the dangling phrase.

Outlaw:	Walking through the park, the grass tickled my feet.
The Problem:	“Walking through the park” seems to modify the grass. However, The grass cannot walk through the park. Therefore, this is a misplaced modifier.
Rehabilitated:	The grass tickled my feet as I walked through the park. Walking through the park, I found that the grass tickled my feet.