

A Teacher's guide to Anguished English

This Podcast is designed to introduce a fun and interactive way to teach modifiers which correlate with misplaced pronouns; two major/common errors we see in student work. It will also help you to revise your students work in a noninvasive manner.

Anguished English by Richard Lederer, is a fun read, and yes, it is about grammar! Students will find the errors amusing and easy to understand.

Modifier:

Modifiers are interesting because we don't tend to notice them unless we make a mistake with them. As we see continuously throughout *Anguished English*. A modifier is a phrase or word meant to describe or explain part of a sentence.

A Modifier can be a word. Notice the following sentences, where "gently" is the modifier...

We scrubbed the china plates gently
We gently scrubbed the china plates
Gently, we scrubbed the china plates.

It can also be a phrase, Notec the following sentence where "Everyday" is the modifier...

Everyday, our favorite television shows plays *Sex in the City*.
Our favorite television show, *Sex in the City* plays everyday.

Why it is important to improve and address misused modifiers

They can change, confuse, or otherwise affect the meaning of a sentence

The Basic Types of Misplaced Modifiers:

Misplaced Words

Problem: The modifier is too far away from the word it modifies.

Solution: Move the word.

President Bush, President of the United States of America has **nearly** frustrated all of America he has been ruling for the past eight years.

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The modifier "nearly" is places closer to the modified "America"

Misplaced Phrases and Clauses

The same as misplaced words, only with phrases.

Problem: The modifier is too far from the word it modifies.

Solution: Move the phrase/clause to a more logical place

I heard that she was planning on marrying him while I was listening below her window.

While I was listening below her window, I heard that she was planning on marrying him.

Squinting Modifiers

Problem: An ambiguous modifier that can modify a word before it or after it.

Solution: Define that word it is modifying.

Doing push-ups correctly builds your muscles.

(Does it refer to “doing push-ups correctly” or “correctly doing push-ups?”)

Doing push-ups correctly WILL build your muscles.

Dangling Modifiers

The monarch of all misused modifiers. In a Dangling Modifier the modifier either refers to no work or the wrong word.

No Word

Oops: Trained in physics, it is natural to be good at math.

Better: Since he was trained in physics, it is natural that he is good at math.

Trained in physics, it is natural that I am good at math.

The introductory phrase (“trained in...”) is meant to modify a person, but the subject is missing.

Wrong Word

Oops: While driving on Academy yesterday afternoon, a tree began to fall towards Kelly’s car.

Better: While Kelly was driving on Academy yesterday afternoon, a tree began to all toward her car.

Guide to revision.

Provide all students a worksheet regarding misplacement of modifiers and pronouns. Allow them to always have access for reference.

- AS A CLASS: Go over modifiers, provide examples of student work. Go over modifiers and misplaced pronouns again the day before a draft is due.
- WORKING IN PAIRS: Have the students either read their own work aloud to one-another, or provide examples of other misuses, and have them correct them.
- SMALL GROUPS: Provide examples and give time for them to correct them. As a class go over what they noticed, and how they corrected it.

