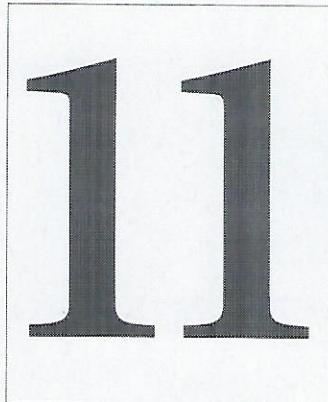


Students: * You may work on this packet in 5 sections *

LESSON



Using Modifiers

LESSON SUMMARY

In this lesson, you will learn how to insert single-word modifiers—such as adjectives, adverbs, and phrase modifiers—to give your writing accuracy and detail.

Words and phrases that describe other words are called *modifiers*. Adjectives and adverbs are known as single-word modifiers. When revising your writing, correct usage of modifiers should be a top priority.

► Adjectives

Adjectives modify a noun or a pronoun in a sentence. They answer one of three questions about another word in the sentence: *which one?* *what kind?* or *how many?*

Example

I remember the *first* time I drove a car.

Which time was it? The *first* time.

Example

It was a *green* car.

What *kind* of car was it? A *green* car.

Example

I accidentally bumped *three* cars when I parallel parked.

How *many* cars did I bump? *Three* cars.

► **Adverbs**

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

Example

The man ate *quickly*.

The adverb *quickly* modifies the verb *ate*.

Example

He made an *extremely* annoying sound.

The adverb *extremely* modifies the adjective *annoying*.

Example

The other patrons were *quite understandably* disturbed.

The adverb *quite* modifies the adverb *understandably*.

Adverbs answer one of four questions about another word in the sentence: *where?*, *when?*, *how?*, and *to what extent?*

Example

I put my carry-on bag *below* the seat.

Where did I put my carry-on bag? *Below* the seat.

Example

I will need my book *later*.

When will I need my book? *Later*.

Example

The plane taxied *slowly* to the runway.

How did the plane taxi to the runway? *Slowly*.

Example

I could *hardly* wait until takeoff.

To what extent could I wait? *Hardly*.

► **Adjective or Adverb?**

It can be confusing to determine whether an adjective or an adverb is appropriate in a sentence. Whenever a modifier is placed directly before an action verb, an adjective, or another adverb, it is always an adverb. When an adverb comes after the word it modifies, it can be tempting to use an adjective instead. A common error occurs when writers use an adjective in place of an adverb.

Incorrect Example

Move the piano very *careful*.

Careful is used incorrectly as an adjective in the sentence.

Edited Example

Move the piano very *carefully*.

Incorrect Example

We sang as *loud* as we could.

Loud is used incorrectly as an adjective in the sentence.

Edited Example

We sang as *loudly* as we could.

► **Linking Verbs**

An adjective rather than an adverb almost always follows a linking verb. The linking verb *to be* does not cause much confusion, but most of the other

linking verbs can also be used as action verbs. Following is a list of confusing linking verbs:

look	appear	smell
stay	grow	seem
sound	feel	taste
remain	become	act

Example

The police officer *appeared* angry.
Angry is an adjective describing the officer.

Example

The police officer *appeared* suddenly.
Suddenly is an adverb that tells *how* the officer appeared.

If you are not sure whether to use an adjective or an adverb following a verb, determine whether the verb is used as a linking verb. If so, use an adjective.

Exercise 1

Select the correct word for each sentence and write whether it is an adjective or an adverb on the line provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. Yelena completed the translation (*easy, easily*).

2. Billy seemed (*nervous, nervously*) as he got up to speak.

3. The manager (*quick, quickly*) made her way to the front desk.

4. Wally's fingerpainting was displayed (*prominent, prominently*) on the fridge.

5. The two boys talked (*loud, loudly*) about the game.

6. Oswald's injury looks (*bad, badly*).

7. The bulldog looked (*shy, shyly*) at his master.

8. Why does every book in this series end so (*sad, sadly*)?

► **Confusing Adjectives and Adverbs**

Fewer and Less

Fewer and *less* are both adjectives, and their use can be confusing. *Fewer* is used to describe things that can be counted. *Less* refers to quantity or degree.

Example

Joan has *fewer* earaches than she used to have.
 You can count the number of earaches, so *fewer* is used.

Example

There has been *less* wind this week.

Wind cannot be counted. It refers to quantity, as in “how much wind?” *Less* is used.

Example

This project is *less* important than the last.

Importance cannot be counted. It is a matter of degree, so *less* is used.

This, That, These, and Those

This, that, these, and those are being used as pronouns when they are not modifying another noun in the sentence. When used as adjectives, *this* and *that* modify singular nouns, and *these* and *those* modify plural nouns.

Example

This newspaper is my favorite.

Example

Those dogs keep barking.

Kind, sort, and type require singular modifiers.

Example

This kind tastes like orange.

Example

That sort of bad acting can be hard to watch.

Them

Them is always a pronoun and never an adjective.

Incorrect Example

Are you going with *them* guys?

Edited Example

Are you going with *those* guys?

Edited Example

Are you going with them?

Good, Bad, Well, and Badly

Good and *bad* are adjectives. *Well* and *badly* are adverbs. Occasionally, *good* and *bad* are mistakenly used to describe a verb when *well* or *badly* should be used.

Incorrect Example

The jazz band performed *good* at the conference.

Edited Example

The jazz band performed *well* at the conference.

Well modifies the verb *performed*.

Example

The tree house was *badly* built.

Badly modifies the verb *built*.

Example

Lena felt *good* after her massage.

Good describes how *Lena* feels.

Example

He is a *bad* photographer.

Bad describes the noun *photographer*.

Real and Really

Real should not be used as an adverb. *Really* is the proper adverbial form.

Incorrect Example

I had a *real* bad accident.

Edited Example

I had a *really* bad accident.

Slow and Slowly

Slow is an adjective and *slowly* is an adverb. A common mistake, and a very public one, has been made

on highway signs that instruct drivers to *go slow* or *drive slow*. When you use *slow* in your writing, use it as an adjective. Do not let this common mistake affect your writing. Next time you pass one of those signs, you can take the role of editor and smile to yourself. Just remember to drive *slowly*.

Exercise 2

Select the correct word for each sentence and write whether it is an adjective or an adverb on the line provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

9. The windshield wipers did not work (**good, well**).

10. There were (**fewer, less**) cars on the road this summer.

11. The damage from the flooding looks (**bad, badly**).

12. Take off (**them, those**) wet shoes.

13. When there is ice on the road, remember to go (**slow, slowly**).

14. The kiwi fruit did not taste (**good, well**).

15. They forgot his birthday, so he feels (**bad, badly**).

16. There were (**fewer, less**) cool breezes on the beach today.

17. It was a (**real, really**) hot day.

18. (**Them, those**) houses are all the same.

► **Comparative and Superlative**

Adjectives and adverbs change form when they are used to compare degrees of qualities. There are three degrees of comparison: *positive*, *comparative*, and *superlative*. The *comparative* form is used when describing two items. There are two ways to create the comparative form:

- Add *-er* to the modifier if it is a short word of one or two syllables.
- Use the word *more* or the word *less* before the modifier if it is a longer word with more than two syllables.

If you are comparing more than two items, use the *superlative* form. Like the comparative form, the *superlative* form is created in two ways:

- Add *-est* to the modifier if it is a short word of one or two syllables.
- Use the word *most* or *least* before the modifier if it is a longer word with more than two syllables.

USING MODIFIERS

Examples are provided in the table below.

MODIFIER	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
shiny	shinier	shiniest
funny	funnier	funniest
strong	stronger	strongest
intelligent	more (or less) intelligent	most (or least) intelligent
accurately	more (or less) accurately	most (or least) accurately
incredible	more (or less) incredible	most (or least) incredible

If these rules held true all the time, then the *comparative* form and the *superlative* form would be easy to master. However, there are exceptions to

these rules. Some modifiers change form completely. Examples are provided in the table below.

MODIFIER	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
good	better	best
well	better	best
many	more	most
much	more	most
bad	worse	worst
little	less or lesser	least
far	farther or further	farthest or furthest

Examples

Air freight is a *better* way to ship than on the ground. (comparing two ways)

Blue looks *better* than any other color we've seen. (comparing two colors many times)

Grilling salmon is the *best* way to cook it. (comparing more than one way)

Stevenson High School is the *best* high school in the Bronx. (comparing more than two high schools)

► Avoiding Double Comparisons

A double comparison occurs when a writer uses *more* with a modifier containing the comparative

ending *-er* or *most* with a modifier containing the superlative ending *-est*.

Incorrect Example

Julio is *more sleepier* than I am.

Sleepier already implies *more*, so it is unnecessary.

Edited Example

Julio is *sleepier* than I am.

Incorrect Example

That song was the *least likeliest* Grammy winner I have ever heard.

Edited Example

That song was the *least likely* Grammy winner I have ever heard.

► **Avoiding Double Negatives**

When a negative word is added to a statement that is already negative, a *double negative* results. Double negatives are not always obvious, like the use of *not no*.

Incorrect Example

There is *not no* room in the car.

Incorrect Example

The school *doesn't* have *no* textbooks for Latin.

Remember, the contraction *doesn't* is short for *does not*.

Often, double negatives occur when words that function as negative words, like *hardly* or *barely*, are used with other negative words.

Incorrect Example

I *can't hardly* hear you in this heavy rain.

Edited Example

I *can hardly* hear you in this heavy rain.

Incorrect Example

The snow *won't barely* cover the walkway.

Edited Example

The snow *will barely* cover the walkway.

► **Avoiding Illogical Comparisons**

Other or Else

Use the words *other* or *else* when making comparisons between an individual member and the rest of a group.

Incorrect Example

Matthew is smarter than any man.

In the above example, Matthew himself is a man, so the comparison implies that Matthew is smarter than himself.

Edited Example

Matthew is smarter than any *other* man.

Incorrect Example

Lily is as talented as anyone in her violin class.

Edited Example

Lily is as talented as anyone *else* in her violin class.

Clearly Stated Comparisons

To avoid confusing your reader, clearly state both parts of a comparison.

Example

I like her more than Mrs. Schnitzer.

Edited Examples

I like her more than Mrs. Schnitzer does.

I like her more than I like Mrs. Schnitzer.

► **Misplaced Single-Word Modifiers**

The clearest way to use modifiers is to place them as closely as possible to the words they describe. A misplaced modifier can confuse your reader.

Example

Evelyn *only* ate the fried rice.

This sentence is confusing because the modifier is placed close to the verb *ate*. If the intended meaning of the sentence is that Evelyn did not eat any other dish, place the modifier closer to *fried rice*.

Edited Example

Evelyn ate *only* the fried rice.

Example

Peyton *almost* passed three classes.

The sentence above implies that Peyton did not pass any of the three classes.

Example

Peyton passed *almost* three classes.

The sentence above implies that Peyton passed two, *almost* three classes. The placement of the modifier *almost* changed the meaning of the sentence.

Example

To move across the country, Sofia *just* leased a car.

The above sentence implies that Sofia did not buy or borrow a car, but leased one instead.

Example

To move across the country, Sofia leased *just* a car.

Instead of leasing a truck or a trailer, Sofia leased only a car.

► **Misplaced Phrase Modifiers**

Phrase modifiers (see Lesson 4) that describe nouns and pronouns must also be placed as closely as possible to the words they describe.

Example

A child stood next to the car who was screaming loudly.

Was the car screaming loudly? Most likely it was the child who was screaming, so place the phrase modifier *who was screaming loudly* next to *a child* in the sentence.

Edited Example

A child who was screaming loudly stood next to the car.

Example

I found a bag in the ditch full of rare coins.

Was the ditch full of rare coins? If not, move the phrase modifier.

Edited Example

I found a bag full of rare coins in the ditch.

When proofreading your writing, check carefully to make sure that the modifiers give your sentences the correct meaning.

Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers. Write the corrected sentence on the lines provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

19. I ordered a sweater from a catalog for my mother that was too small.

20. Taisha bought a hamburger last night that was burnt.

21. My friends and I were told about dangerous Halloween candy by the teacher.

22. Maxim nearly ran the mile in four minutes flat.

23. I only watched the first half of the game.

24. I got a cut on my finger from a fire hydrant that is bleeding.

► Dangling Modifiers

Words, phrases, and clauses that begin a sentence and are set off by commas are called *dangling modifiers*. They sometimes modify the wrong noun or pronoun. To revise dangling modifiers, add a word so that it is more clear which noun or pronoun they are modifying, or turn the phrase into a clause by giving it a subject.

Incorrect Example

Studying for the test, many facts can be learned.

Are the facts studying for the test? Add a clear subject for the dangling modifier to modify more clearly.

Edited Example

Studying for the test, I can learn many facts.

Incorrect Example

To learn more, the school offers night classes.

The school wants to learn more? Turn the dangling modifier into a clause by adding a subject.

Edited Example

For the students to learn more, the school offers night classes.

Exercise 4

Revise the following sentences to correct the dangling modifiers. Write the corrected sentence on the line provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

25. Reading the encyclopedia, many important facts are learned.

26. After agreeing to trim the hedge, the clippers could not be found.

27. Looking out of the window, the rain poured down.

28. While eating dinner, the doorbell rang.

Summary

This lesson has shown you how to use modifiers correctly in your writing. When you revise your writing, be careful to use adjectives, adverbs, and phrase modifiers correctly.