



Common Modifiers

Modifiers in sentences make your writing more interesting to read!

Adjectives

Adjectives describe or modify nouns or pronouns. They address what kind, which, or how many.

Example: A *black* cat slept on the porch.

Example: We felt *giddy*.

Adjectives cannot modify adverbs, verbs, or other adjectives—only nouns.

Incorrect: She ate her lunch quick.

Correct: She ate the quick lunch. (Quick describes what kind of lunch it was.)

Adjective Clauses

Adjective clauses are dependent clauses that begin with relative pronouns such as that, which, who, whose, and whom; they allow sentence combining.

Example: Colorado Springs is a city. Juan lives in it.

Alternative: Colorado Springs is a city in which Juan lives.

Adverbs

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Most adverbs end in –ly, but that is not always the case. Another clue is they address how, when, where, or why.

Example: Joe dances *gracefully*.

Example: Hallie is *extremely* tall.

Adverbs cannot modify nouns.

Incorrect: I have a happily dog.

Correct: I have a happy dog.

Adverb Clauses

Adverb clauses modify the whole sentence and are used to explain relationships between ideas.

Example: Susan procrastinates. She does not want to waste time.

Alternative: Although Susan procrastinates, she does not want to waste time.

Verbals

Verbals modify an entire sentence. The subject of the sentence must perform the action of the verbal. There are three kinds of verbals in English:

- to verbals – to eat (infinitive)
- -ing verbals – eating (present participle)
- had verbals – had eaten (past participle)

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Adverb dangling and misplaced modifiers are when a verbal's agent is not the same as the subject of the sentence it modifies, it is a "dangling" modifier. The modifier is "misplaced" if it is attached to the wrong noun.

Incorrect: Eager to get home, the car sped around the corner. (Eager car?)

Correct: Eager to get home, Jim sped his car around the corner.

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](#). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!