A modifier can help clarify, describe, or give detail about a concept. Modifiers can add interest to sentences and be an important tool for writing engaging content.

A dangling modifier is a phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence and can end up distorting or confusing the meaning of a sentence.

The answers to these practice examples are located at the Rolvaag Writing Desk!

Have more questions? Still don’t understand dangling modifiers? Make an appointment with a writing tutor!

1.) Visit the Writing Desk homepage, or stolaf.edu/asc/writing-help/
2.) Click on the Appointments box
3.) Sign in with your St. Olaf email, then click an appointment that works with your schedule!

Or just drop on by!

Information retrieved from:

Pamphlet created by Naomi Chalk '18
1. Name the appropriate action doer as the subject of the main clause.

Incorrect: Closing at 8pm, I didn’t get any food from the Cage.

Who closes at 8pm? How it’s written, the sentence states that I close at 8pm. To revise, make sure the main clause names what is actually doing the action (the Cage).

Revised: Closing at 8pm, the Cage didn’t serve me food.

The sentence now states the object (the Cage) doing the action in the modified phrase (closing at 8pm).

2. Revise dangling modifiers by changing the modifier into a complete introductory phrase that names the doer of the action.

Incorrect: Without knowing his name, it was difficult to introduce him to the professor in class.

Who didn’t know his name? The sentence says that “it” didn’t know his name. First, decide who is introducing him.

Revised: Because Amanda didn’t know his name, it was difficult to introduce him to the professor in class.

The phrase is now a complete introductory clause, so it is no longer modifying any part of the sentence and is thus not “dangling.”

3. Combine the phrase and main clause.

Incorrect: To improve her grades, the chemistry test was taken again.

Who wanted to improve her grades? The sentence says the test improved her grades. To revise, try combining the modifier into the main clause:

Revised: Maria took the chemistry test again to improve her grades.

Dangling modifiers can be fixed in three different ways

Try correcting these sentences so they use modifiers correctly:

Tired from a shift at the library, my dorm room was a nice place to relax.

With lots of Flex dollars, the Cage is a great place for me to get a snack.

Hosting a fun hall event each month, Food for Finals is Hall Council’s biggest event all year.

Now try making your own sentences using these rules!