

## Chapter 5: Using Modifiers



# Adjective and Adverb Modifiers

A **modifier** is a word or group of words that makes the meaning of another word more definite. Modifiers can be *adjectives* (*adjectival*) or *adverbs* (*adverbial*).

Use an **adjective** to limit the meaning of a noun or a pronoun.

Train whistles have a **mournful** sound. [The adjective *mournful* limits the meaning of the noun *sound*.]

Use an **adverb** to limit the meaning of a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

Trains whistle **mournfully**. [The adverb *mournfully* limits the meaning of the verb *whistle*.]

A linking verb, such as *be*, *become*, *look*, *seem*, or *taste*, is often followed by a *predicate adjective*. A **predicate adjective** is a word that modifies the subject. Most linking verbs can also be used as action verbs. Whether to use an adjective or an adverb in a sentence may depend on whether the verb is a linking verb or an action verb. If a word in the predicate modifies the subject, use the adjective form. If it modifies the verb, use the adverb form.

The book **looked interesting**. [*Looked* is a linking verb. The predicate adjective *interesting* modifies the subject *book*.]

The child **looked excitedly** at the new book. [*Looked* is an action verb modified by the adverb *excitedly*.]

**Exercise** The following sentences contain twelve adjectives and eight adverbs. On the lines provided, label each adjective and adverb and give the word it modifies. [Note: Do not include the articles *a*, *an*, and *the*.]

EXAMPLE: 1. First get a craft knife and some black paper.

First—adverb—get; craft—adjective—knife;  
some—adjective—paper; black—adjective—paper

1. In many cultures, cutting paper to make pictures has long been a traditional art.

2. Mexican artisans use a small, very sharp knife to cut designs in colored paper.

3. As the oddly shaped scraps fall away, an image slowly appears.

4. Planning the work is often a challenge because each part of the picture must connect somehow to the border or to another part of the design.

5. The artist sometimes leaves a background pattern of thin stripes or lines to support the main subject.

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### WORKSHEET 2

## Comparison

The forms of modifiers change to show comparison. Adjectives change form to compare one noun or pronoun with another noun or pronoun that has the same quality. Adverbs are used to make the comparisons between verbs.

ADJECTIVE: The Pacific Ocean is **larger** than the Atlantic Ocean.

ADVERB: Gregor swam **quickly**, but Alexander swam **more quickly**.

There are three degrees of comparison: *positive*, *comparative*, and *superlative*. A one-syllable modifier regularly forms its comparative and superlative degrees by adding *-er* and *-est*. Some two-syllable modifiers form their comparative and superlative degrees by adding *-er* and *-est*. Other two-syllable modifiers form their comparative and superlative degrees with *more* and *most*. Modifiers that have more than two syllables form their comparative and superlative degrees with *more* and *most*.

	One-Syllable Modifier	Two-Syllable Modifier	Three-Syllable Modifier
positive	smooth	lonely selfish	delightful
comparative	smoother	lonelier more selfish	more delightful
superlative	smoothest	loneliest most selfish	most delightful

To indicate a decrease in a quality, modifiers use the word *less* or *least*.

courteous      less courteous      least courteous

**Exercise** On the lines provided, write the comparative and superlative forms of the following modifiers.

EXAMPLES: 1. tall taller tallest

2. gigantic more gigantic most gigantic

1. few \_\_\_\_\_
2. smart \_\_\_\_\_
3. likely \_\_\_\_\_
4. fundamental \_\_\_\_\_
5. sincere \_\_\_\_\_
6. silly \_\_\_\_\_
7. humid \_\_\_\_\_
8. frequently \_\_\_\_\_
9. strong \_\_\_\_\_
10. congenial \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 5: Using Modifiers****WORKSHEET 3****Irregular Comparison**

Some modifiers do not follow the regular methods of forming their comparative and superlative degrees.

POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
bad	worse	worst
good/well	better	best
little	less	least
many/much	more	most

Do not add *-er* or *-est* to irregular comparative and superlative forms. For example, use *worse*, not *worser*; use *best*, not *bestest*.

**Exercise A** Fill in the blank with the correct form of the modifier in parentheses.

EXAMPLE: 1. Summer is my most active time of year. (*much*)

1. Cats have a \_\_\_\_\_ sense of balance than many other animals. (*good*)
2. Mayor Cook created \_\_\_\_\_ jobs than the last mayor. (*many*)
3. Far \_\_\_\_\_ people live on that island than I thought. (*many*)
4. I hope you feel \_\_\_\_\_ tomorrow than you do today. (*well*)
5. Ed contributed \_\_\_\_\_ than anyone else in class. (*little*)
6. Salim is the \_\_\_\_\_ athlete in our school. (*good*)
7. The less they slept, the \_\_\_\_\_ they felt. (*bad*)
8. Of all the contestants, Rufino performed \_\_\_\_\_. (*well*)
9. It was the \_\_\_\_\_ winter the pioneers had experienced. (*bad*)
10. I like Tony \_\_\_\_\_ than I did earlier. (*much*)

**Exercise B** For each of the following sentences, underline the correct form of the modifier in parentheses.

EXAMPLE: 1. Amelia is the (best, bestest) tennis player in the school.

1. That tree is in (worse, worst) condition now than it was last year.
2. Cheng gave away the games he liked (leastest, least).
3. The runners ran (better, more well) this season than they did last season.
4. Jefferson is the (baddest, worst) driver I've ever ridden with.
5. We usually have the (mostest, most) rain in March.

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# Use of Comparative and Superlative Forms

Use the comparative degree when comparing two things. Use the superlative degree when comparing more than two.

COMPARING TWO: Nasuma is **more artistic** than Tamara.

COMPARING MORE THAN TWO: Among all of Mr. Russell's art students, Nasuma is the **most artistic**.

**Exercise: Revising** On the lines provided, rewrite the following sentences using the correct comparative or superlative forms of modifiers.

EXAMPLE: 1. Of all the students in my P.E. class, Ryan is the better swimmer.

Of all the students in my P.E. class, Ryan is the best swimmer.

1. He was the more able and intelligent of the three job applicants.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Which of these women, Pocahontas or Sacagawea, is most famous?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. John, Richard's twin brother, was the oldest by three and a half minutes.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Floyd and his brother are landscape designers who are in demand throughout the state, but Floyd is best known in this area.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. When I have a choice of strawberry or vanilla, I take vanilla because I like it best.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Which of the four seasons do you like better?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Of the two colleges that I am considering, Spelman College looks most interesting.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. The cheetah is the faster running of all the animals in the world.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Compared to the muscles in the arm, those in the leg are strongest.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Denver has the higher elevation of all major cities in the United States.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 5: Using Modifiers

### WORKSHEET 5

## Other, Else/Double Comparisons/ Unclear Comparisons

Include the word *other* or *else* when comparing one thing with others in the same group.

NONSTANDARD: The National Bank Tower has more office space than any building in the city. [It can't have more office space than itself.]

STANDARD: The National Bank Tower has more office space than any **other** building in the city.

Avoid **double comparisons**. A double comparison is one that contains both *-er* and *more* (or *less*) or both *-est* and *most* (or *least*).

NONSTANDARD: Her second novel is **more better** than her first one.

STANDARD: Her second novel is **better** than her first one.

Be sure that your comparisons are clear. You can often make a comparison clearer by adding a word or phrase.

UNCLEAR: I see Jacques more often than my brother.

CLEAR: I see Jacques more often than **my brother** sees him.

CLEAR: I see Jacques more often than I see **my brother**.

**Exercise: Revising** Rewrite each sentence on the line provided, correcting faulty comparisons. Note: There may be more than one way to correct an unclear comparison. You need only provide one revision.

EXAMPLE: 1. Of the tenth-grade girls, Ertha is the most tallest.

Of the tenth-grade girls, Ertha is the tallest.

1. Laurie is more friendlier than she has ever been.

2. I miss the ocean more than my mother.

3. Margaret Mead was more famous than any anthropologist of her time.

4. This year's drought was much worst than last year's.

5. Diego lifted weights and soon was stronger than anyone in town.

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### WORKSHEET 6

# Dangling Modifiers

When a verbal phrase comes at the beginning of a sentence, the word that the phrase modifies should follow as closely as possible. If a modifying phrase or clause does not clearly modify a word or word group in the same sentence, that phrase or clause is a **dangling modifier**.

To correct a dangling modifier, rearrange the words in the sentence and add or change words to make the meaning logical and clear.

DANGLING: While climbing the tree, the dog barked.

CLEAR: While the cat climbed the tree, the dog barked.

**Exercise: Revising** On the line provided, rewrite each sentence so that the modifier clearly and sensibly modifies a word in the sentence.

EXAMPLE: 1. When learning how to skate, an instructor is helpful.

When learning how to skate, I find an instructor is helpful.

1. Caught in the net, escape was impossible.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Looking through the telescope, the moon seemed enormous.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Out running, his mouth got dry.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Going around the bend, the ocean came into view.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Doing a few tap-dance steps, the floor got scratched.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Rushing to class, my books slipped from under my arm and fell down the stairs.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. To grow plants successfully, light and temperature must be carefully controlled.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. After finishing the housework, the room almost sparkled.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. To make manicotti, pasta is stuffed with ricotta cheese.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Concluding her opening speech, the jury looked at her in awe.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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### WORKSHEET 7

## Misplaced Modifiers

A **misplaced modifier** is a phrase or clause that makes a sentence awkward or unclear because it seems to modify the wrong word or group of words. Modifying phrases and clauses should be placed as near as possible to the words they modify.

MISPLACED: The log is in the fireplace that was cut this morning.

CORRECTED: The log **that was cut this morning** is in the fireplace.

**Exercise: Revising** On the lines provided, revise the following sentences so that they make sense. Be sure that you do not misplace another modifier in revising a sentence.

EXAMPLE: 1. Mr. Tate noticed some caterpillars pruning his fruit tree.

While pruning his fruit tree, Mr. Tate noticed some caterpillars.

1. Mrs. Barry drove downtown after her husband had left for the factory to do some shopping.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I found a huge boulder taking a shortcut through the woods.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Our ancestors hunted deer, bison, and other large animals armed with weapons made of wood and stone.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Missie saw a heron driving over the bridge.  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. We noticed several signs riding down the highway.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. We could see corn growing from our car window.  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Barking wildly and straining at the chain, the mail carrier retreated from the dog.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Rosa Parks calmly refused to move with quiet dignity to the back of the bus.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. He recounted an incident about a nuclear chain reaction during his chemistry lecture.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Jan showed the rooms to her visitors that she had painted.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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# Review

**Exercise A** For each of the following sentences, fill in the blank with the correct comparative or superlative form of the modifier in *italics* before the sentence.

EXAMPLE: 1. *old* Henry James's *older* brother William was the first notable American psychologist.

1. *young* The \_\_\_\_\_ of these two famous brothers, Henry deserved his reputation as a keen observer of human nature.
2. *early* According to Henry James, his \_\_\_\_\_ conscious memory was a view of a street in Paris.
3. *much* Art, music, and theater all appealed to Henry James, but he loved the theater \_\_\_\_\_.
4. *deep* In fact, his \_\_\_\_\_ disappointment was that he never wrote successfully for the stage.
5. *complicated* According to Henry James, the American Civil War made the world seem \_\_\_\_\_ than it had seemed before.

**Exercise B: Revising** The following sentences contain ten errors in the use of modifiers. On the lines provided, rewrite the sentences, using the modifiers correctly.

EXAMPLE: 1. The pottery of the American Southwest is a subject that Mrs. Lin knows real good.

The pottery of the American Southwest is a subject that Mrs. Lin knows really well.

1. Among Pueblo potters, perhaps the famousest are Lucy Lewis, Maria Martinez, Margaret Tafoya, and Fannie Nampeyo.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Lucy Lewis's Acoma pottery is more delicate than any Southwest pottery.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. She uses the most whitest clay.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Because this clay is scarce, the walls of her pots are the most thin.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Maria Martinez' San Ildefonso pottery is more thicker and heavier than Lewis's.

\_\_\_\_\_



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 5, Worksheet 8, continued**

6. Of all the Southwest pottery styles, Martinez' black-on-black pottery may be the wellest known.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
7. No color is used, but the background areas of the black pot are burnished slowly with a small, smooth stone until they become quite a bit more shinier than the main design.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
8. Many of Margaret Tafoya's Santa Clara pots are also solid black, but of these two kinds of black pottery, the Santa Clara pots are the heaviest.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
9. The bold, colorful Hopi pots of Fannie Nampeyo, however, may be the more impressive achievement of all.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
10. Nampeyo's family used a more older technique that they had learned by studying shards of ancient Hopi pots.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise C: Revising** Each of the following sentences contains either a dangling or a misplaced modifier. Revise each sentence, arranging the words so that the meaning is logical and clear. You may have to add or delete some words. Be sure to use commas where they are needed to set off introductory and interrupting modifiers. Use the lines provided.

EXAMPLE: 1. The class sent a get-well message to their teacher on a balloon.

The class sent their teacher a get-well message on a balloon.

1. Running in circles, they saw that the dogs could herd the sheep into the pen.
- \_\_\_\_\_
2. The winners marched onto the platform carrying ribbons and trophies.
- \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 5, Worksheet 8, continued**

3. A police officer warned students who drive too fast about accidents during the defensive-driving class. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. After escaping from slavery, the importance of education was often stressed by Frederick Douglass. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. A brightly colored watercolor was hanging on the wall depicting the four seasons. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Mother found a package outside our house tied with ribbons. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Maria took a close-up photograph of a lion with a telephoto lens. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Building a nest in a tree outside my window, I see a small bird. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. A young woman knocked on the door wearing a suit and a hat. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Walking in the sunshine, it felt too warm. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_