

Unit 9

Modifiers

Objectives

After the completion of this unit, you would be able to–

- explain modifiers.
- identify different types of modifiers used in sentences.
- make sentences by using different types of modifiers.

Overview:

Lesson 1: *Modifiers*

Lesson 2: *Premodifiers*

Lesson 3: *Postmodifiers*

Lesson 4: *Dangling Modifiers*

Answer Key

Lesson 1: Modifiers



What is a modifier?

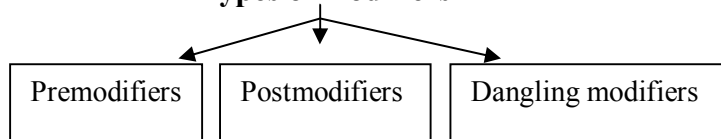
The words or phrases that modify the noun/pronoun are known as modifiers. In other words, some words or phrases take their position before and after the noun head in a noun phrase and modify the noun adding special meaning to it. Modifiers placed before the noun head are called premodifiers while modifiers after the noun head are postmodifiers. Therefore, a noun phrase is usually formed as follows.

(Determiner + Premodifier + Noun head + Postmodifier)

Example: I saw the beautiful girl singing

The	Beautiful	Girl	singing
Determiner	Premodifier	Noun head	Postmodifier

Types of modifiers



Look at the passage below. Notice the words in italics:

Elvis Presley came from a *poor* family. He was born on 8 January in Mississippi. When Elvis was 13, he asked his mother to buy him a bicycle *which was too expensive*. His mother, a *poor housewife*, could only buy an *ordinary* guitar. In the same year Elvis and his family left Mississippi. They moved to Memphis, a *small town* in Tennessee. One day in 1954 he went to a *recording* studio called *Sun Records*. He wanted to make a record *for his mother's birthday*. The secretary at the studio heard Elvis and took him to her boss, *Sam Phillips*. Elvis was Sam Phillips' dream – a *white boy with a black voice*.

If you notice carefully, you will see the words in italics tell us something about the nouns they modify. For example, the adjective 'poor' modifies the noun 'family'. Now let us see how some other modifiers have been used in the text:

which was too expensive	modifies	bi-cycle
poor	modifies	housewife
a small town in Tennessee	modifies	memphis
recording	modifies	studio
called sun Records	modifies	studio
for his mother's birthday	modifies	record
Sam Phillips	modifies	her boss
white	modifies	boy
black	modifies	voice

From the examples, we see that adjectives are often used as modifiers. But there are other examples of modifiers which are not adjectives. Therefore a noun can also be modified by a phrase, a clause or another noun. We have also seen that modifiers can be used both before and after nouns they modify.



Exercise 1

Work in pairs to find out modifiers in the following passage. Write them in the table below to show which of them are premodifiers and which of them are postmodifiers.

Premodifiers	Postmodifiers

Charles Dickens, of all the great nineteenth Century English novelists, is perhaps the most beloved by his readers. The ideas for many of the events and people in Dickens's novels grew from his own experiences. Dickens was born in Portsmouth, on the southern coast of England, and grew up in a poor neighbourhood in London. His father, a clerk, accumulated huge debts. Dickens endured a difficult childhood, for he was forced to work in factories from an early age. His employers were often needlessly cruel. The painful experiences Dickens endured as a child worker inspired him to write *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*. In these two well-known novels appear some of the cruelest characters in English fiction. Vivid portraits of schoolmasters, criminals and innocent victims are found in many of his novels. Dickens, who died as a result of continuing poor health at the age of fifty-eight, left an enduring legacy.

Lesson 2: Premodifiers



What is a Premodifier?

Modifiers which are placed after determiners but before the head of a noun phrase are called premodifiers. Adjectives are widely used as premodifiers, yet there are some other types of premodifiers too.

Different types of premodifiers:

1. Adjectives as premodifiers:

We had a *pleasant* holiday last week.

There were plenty of *bright* people before the castle.

Sabrina is a *meritorious* student.

2. Nouns as premodifiers:

Are the *removal* expenses paid by your company?

The *passenger* ship dropped anchor in the harbor.

3. Adverbs as premodifiers:

We had a *very* pleasant holiday last week.

She writes a *few* letters to her parents.

4. *-ing* participles as premodifiers:

Only a *beginning* student will find difficulty with Calculus.

The *developing* countries are doing well in garments business.

5. *-ed* participles as premodifiers:

Often the *reduced* price of everyday commodities are out of reach for the poor.

The *defeated* army were captivated in the prison.

His father is a *retired* English teacher.

6. Compound words as premodifiers:

We have just bought a *brand-new* car.

That's an absolutely *first-class* idea.

That is an *out-of-date* dictionary.

The room is decorated with *red-and-white-striped* wallpaper.

Lesson 3: Postmodifiers



What is a Postmodifier?

A noun can be modified by a following word, phrase or clause, and the word, phrase, or clause is called postmodifier. Postmodifiers are of different types:

1. Adjectives as postmodifiers:
 - There is nothing *new* about these techniques.
 - They found her mother *sick*.
2. Adverbs as postmodifiers:
 - Can someone tell me a way *out* of it?
 - The authority *here* are very strict.
 - Can you find the road *back*?
 - We visited the house *where* Shakespeare lived.
3. Prepositional phrases as postmodifiers:
 - A white woman *in jeans* was watching me.
 - A ferryman *with colourful toys* was waiting in the station.
 - There must be a better way *of doing it*.
 - The little boy is tired *of hard work*.
4. Relative clauses as postmodifiers:
 - I saw the boy *who was going to the market*.
 - They cleaned the room *which was filled with dirt*.
5. *-ing* participles clauses as postmodifiers:
 - A man *wearing a grey suit* left the office.
 - The people *working in the IT business* are often young.
 - Do you know any of those people *sitting behind us*?
6. *-ed* participle clauses as postmodifiers:
 - The question *debated in the parliament yesterday* was about the new tax.
 - The subject *discussed in the book* is difficult to understand.
7. *-to infinitive* clauses as postmodifiers:
 - I have got something *to say to you*.
 - I have nothing *to share with him*.
8. Appositive clauses as postmodifiers:
 - We were delighted at the news *that our team had own*.
 - Everybody will agree the fact that *inflation is causing hardship*.

Lesson 4: Dangling Modifiers



What is a dangling modifier?

A dangling modifier is a word or phrase that modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence. In other words, dangling modifiers are used either as a single word or a group of words in a sentence where they usually indicate the completion of some work but the performer of the work is not modified directly by it. These modifiers usually appear at the very beginning of a sentence, but these may appear at the end of a sentence as well.

Consider the following example:

Having finished the study, Ragib turned on TV.

In the example above, “having finished” states an action but does not name the doer of that action. In English sentences, the doer must be the subject of the main clause that follows. In this sentence, it is Ragib. He seems logically to be the one doing the action (“having finished”), and this sentence therefore does not have a dangling modifier.

Now consider this sentence:

Having finished the assignment, the TV was turned on.

“Having finished” is a participle expressing action, but the doer is not the TV set (the subject of the main clause): TV sets don’t finish assignments. Since the doer of the action expressed in the participle has not been clearly stated, the participle phrase is said to be a dangling modifier.

Some more examples of dangling modifiers and revisions:

Dangling Modifier:

After reading the original study, the article remains unconvincing.

(The article – the subject of the main clause – did not read the original study.)

Possible Revision:

After reading the original study, I find the article unconvincing.

Dangling Modifier:

Relieved of your responsibilities at your job, your home should be a place of relax.

(Your home – the subject of the main clause – is not relieved of your responsibilities.)

Possible Revision:

Relieved of your responsibilities at your job, you should be able to relax at home.

Dangling Modifier:

The experiment was a failure, not having studied the lab manual carefully.

(The experiment – the subject of the main clause – is not supposed to study the lab manual.)

Possible Revision:

They failed the experiment, not having studied the lab manual carefully.

Dangling Modifiers	Possible Revisions
Having arrived late for practice, a written excuse was needed.	Having arrived late for practice, the captain of the team needed a written excuse.
Without knowing his name, it was difficult to introduce him.	Because Sujana did not know his name, it was difficult to introduce him.
To improve his results, the experiment was done again.	He improved his results by doing the experiment again.



Answer key:

Lesson-1 :

Exercise-1:

Premodifiers	Postmodifiers
Southern	Of all the great nineteenth century English novelists
Poor	On the southern coast of England
huge	A clerk
difficult	who died as a result of continuing poor health
painful	at the age of fifty-eight
child	
two well-known	
cruelest	
vivid	
innocent	
poor	