

The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need: A One-Stop Source for Every Writing Assignment

By Susan Thurman, Larry Shea



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The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need is the ideal resource for everyone who wants to produce writing that is clear, concise, and grammatically excellent. Whether you're creating perfect professional documents, spectacular school papers, or effective personal letters, you'll find this handbook indispensable. From word choice to punctuation to organization, English teacher Susan Thurman guides you through getting your thoughts on paper with polish. Using dozens of examples, The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need provides guidelines for:

- Understanding the parts of speech and elements of a sentence
- Avoiding the most common grammar and punctuation mistakes
- Using correct punctuating in every sentence
- Writing clearly and directly
- Approaching writing projects, whether big or small

Easy to follow and authoritative, *The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need* provides all the necessary tools to make you successful with every type of written expression.



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Editorial Review

About the Author

Susan Thurman has taught English grammar from the junior high school level to the college level. She edits and publishes Class Act, a national magazine that features grammar, writing, and ideas for English teachers, and has written more than fifty articles on English instruction, as well as a number of study guides. She lives in Henderson, Kentucky, where she teaches at Henderson Community College.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. [CN]Chapter 7

[CT]Writing Better Sentences

Certain elements can either make or break a sentence. If a sentence contains a misplaced or dangling modifier or is essentially illogical, it becomes confusing at best and ludicrous at worst. Some brief sentences, called fragments, don't contain a complete thought and are not really proper sentences at all. At the other extreme, a writer may sometimes string several thoughts together to create an endless—and grammatically incorrect—run-on sentence.

This chapter will give you some pointers for looking critically at your sentence construction as well as the tools to fix any problems you find. Knowing what makes a proper sentence will ensure that your writing (and your reputation!) remain solid.

[H1]Misplaced Modifiers

Simply put, misplaced modifiers are words or phrases that you've put in the wrong place. All of your words—whether they're single words, phrases, or clauses—should be as close as possible to whatever they modify (the words they describe or give more information about). Take a look at this sentence, written with a single word in the wrong place:

After her wreck, Joanna could comprehend what the ambulance driver was barely saying.

The way the sentence is written, the ambulance driver is barely speaking—but surely that's not what the writer meant. Barely is out of its correct place because it modifies the wrong word. It should be moved so that it modifies the verb could comprehend. The sentence should be written this way:

After her wreck, Joanna could barely comprehend what the ambulance driver was saying.

Misplaced modifiers can also be phrases, as in this example:

Witnesses reported that the woman was driving the getaway car with flowing black hair.

A car with flowing black hair? Really? With flowing black hair is in the wrong place in the sentence and should be placed after woman. That way, the sentence would read:

Witnesses reported that the woman with flowing black hair was driving the getaway car.

Clauses, too, can be put in the wrong place, as in the following sentence:

Mrs. Anderson could not stop thinking about her sick baby running in the six-mile road race.

That's quite a baby who can run a six-mile road race (even while being sick). The clause running in the six-mile road race is out of place; it should be closer to the noun it modifies (Mrs. Anderson). The sentence should be reworded this way:

Running in the six-mile road race, Mrs. Anderson could not stop thinking about her sick baby.

One of the most common problems with misplaced modifiers comes with what are called limiting modifiers—words like almost, even, hardly, just, merely, nearly, only (only is the one misplaced most often), scarcely, and simply. To convey the correct meaning, limiting modifiers must be placed in front of the words they modify.

Take a look at these sentences:

Already, Mr. Goulooze has almost eaten four slabs of ribs!

How does a person almost eat something? Did he have great willpower four different times? More likely, the sentence should be reworded to say that Mr. Goulooze has eaten almost four slabs of ribs.

Richard has nearly wrecked every car he's had.

Has Richard nearly wrecked the cars—in which case, he should be grateful for his luck—or has he wrecked nearly every car? Remember to always watch out for misplaced modifiers (as Richard should probably watch out for oncoming traffic). Otherwise, you may end up wrecking nearly every sentence you write.

Users Review

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