8 Prefer active verbs.

Choose an active verb whenever possible. Active verbs express meaning more vigorously than forms of the verb *be* or verbs in the passive voice. Forms of *be* (*be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been*) lack vigor because they convey no action. Passive verbs lack strength because their subjects receive the action instead of doing it.

PASSIVE The pumps *were destroyed* by a surge of power.

BE VERB A surge of power *was* responsible for the destruction of the pumps.

ACTIVE A surge of power *destroyed* the pumps.

Even among active verbs, some are more vigorous and colorful than others. Carefully selected verbs can energize a piece of writing.

► **The goalie crouched low, ~~reached~~ swept out his stick, and ~~sent~~ hooked the rebound away from the mouth of the net.**

ACADEMIC WRITING Although you may be tempted to avoid the passive voice completely, keep in mind that some situations call for it, including some scientific writing. For appropriate uses of the passive voice, see 8a; for advice about forming the passive voice, see 28b.

8a Choose the active voice or the passive voice, depending on your writing situation.

In the active voice, the subject does the action; in the passive voice, the subject receives the action. Although both voices are grammatically correct, the active voice is usually more effective because it is clearer and more direct.

ACTIVE Hernando *caught* the fly ball.

PASSIVE The fly ball *was caught* by Hernando.

In passive sentences, the actor (in this case, *Hernando*) frequently does not appear: *The fly ball was caught.*

Most of the time, you will want to emphasize the actor, so you should use the active voice. To replace a passive verb with an active one, make the actor the subject of the sentence.

The settlers stripped the land of timber before realizing
▸ ~~The land was stripped of timber before the settlers realized~~ the
^
consequences of their actions.

The revision emphasizes the actors (*settlers*) by naming them in the subject.

Appropriate uses of the passive voice

The passive voice is appropriate if you want to emphasize the receiver of the action or to minimize the importance of the actor. The writer of the following sentence, for example, wished to emphasize the people affected by the earthquake.

Many Hawaiians *were forced* to leave their homes after the earthquake.

In much scientific writing, the passive voice properly emphasizes the experiment or process being described, not the researcher. Check with your instructor for the preference in your discipline.

Just before harvest, the tobacco plants *are sprayed* with a chemical to prevent the growth of suckers.

8b Replace *be* verbs that result in dull or wordy sentences.

Not every *be* verb needs replacing. The forms of *be* (*be, am, is, are, was, were, being, been*) work well when you want to link a subject to a noun that clearly renames it or to an adjective that describes it: *Orchard House was the home of Louisa May Alcott. The harvest will be bountiful this summer.*

If using a *be* verb makes a sentence needlessly wordy, consider replacing it. Often a phrase following the verb contains a noun or an adjective (such as *violation* or *resistant*) that suggests a more vigorous active verb (*violate, resist*).

▸ Burying nuclear waste in Antarctica would ~~be in violation of~~ violate an
^
international treaty.

► When Rosa Parks ~~was resistant to~~ resisted giving up her seat on the bus, she became a civil rights hero.

8c As a rule, choose a subject that names the person or thing doing the action.

In weak, unemphatic writing, both the actor and the action may be buried in sentence elements other than the subject and the verb. In the following weak sentence, for example, both the actor and the action appear in prepositional phrases, word groups that do not receive much attention from readers.

WEAK The institution of the New Deal had the effect of reversing some of the economic inequalities of the Great Depression.

EMPHATIC The New Deal reversed some of the economic inequalities of the Great Depression.

Consider the subjects and verbs of the two versions — *institution had* versus *New Deal reversed*. The second version expresses the writer's point more emphatically.

► ~~The use of~~ pure oxygen can ~~cause~~ heal~~ing in~~ wounds that are otherwise untreatable.

In the original sentence, the subject and verb — *use can cause* — express the point blandly. *Pure oxygen can heal* makes the point more directly.

EXERCISE 8–1 Revise any weak, unemphatic sentences by replacing passive verbs or *be* verbs with active alternatives. If a sentence is emphatic, do not change it. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

► ~~The campfire was doused by the ranger before we were given~~ The ranger doused the campfire before giving us a ticket for unauthorized use of a campsite.

a. The Saxons were defeated by the Prussians in 1745.

b. The entire operation is managed by Ahmed, the producer.

c. The sea kayaks were expertly paddled by the tour guides.

d. At the crack of rocket and mortar blasts, I jumped from the top bunk and landed on my buddy below, who was crawling on the floor looking for his boots.

e. The protesters' shouts were heard by the senator as she walked up the Capitol steps.

EXERCISE 8–2 For each writing situation below, decide whether it is more appropriate to use the active voice or the passive voice. Answers appear in the back of the book.

a. You are writing a research paper explaining the effects of a deadly bacterial outbreak in a remote Chilean village. (active / passive)

b. You are writing a letter to the editor, praising an emergency medical technician whose quick action saved an injured motorist. (active / passive)

c. You are writing a summary of the procedure you used in an experiment for your biology class. (active / passive)

d. To accompany your résumé, you must write a cover letter explaining your recent accomplishments. (active / passive)

e. You must fill out an incident report, explaining in detail how your actions led to a collision between the forklift you were operating and a wall of fully stocked shelves. (active / passive)

9 Balance parallel ideas.

If two or more ideas are parallel, they should be expressed in parallel grammatical form. Single words should be balanced with single words, phrases with phrases, clauses with clauses.

There is more work to be done, more justice to be had, more barriers to break. — Barack Obama

This novel is not to be tossed lightly aside, but to be hurled with great force. — Dorothy Parker

9a Balance parallel ideas in a series.

Balance all items in a series by presenting them in parallel grammatical form.

▸ **Children who study music also learn confidence, discipline, creativity.**
and ~~they are creative.~~

The revision presents all the items in the series as nouns: *confidence*, *discipline*, and *creativity*.

▸ **Impressionist painters believed in focusing on ordinary subjects, capturing the effects of light on those subjects, and ~~to use~~ using short brushstrokes.**

The revision uses *-ing* forms for all the items in the series: *focusing*, *capturing*, and *using*.

Headings

Headings on the same level of organization should be written in parallel form — as single words, phrases, or clauses.

PHRASES AS HEADINGS

Safeguarding Earth's atmosphere
Charting the path to sustainable energy
Conserving global forests

INDEPENDENT CLAUSES AS HEADINGS

Ask the patient to describe current symptoms.
Take a detailed medical history.
Record the patient's vital signs.

Lists

Lists are usually introduced with an independent clause followed by a colon. They are most readable when they are presented in parallel grammatical form. Like headings, lists might consist of single words, phrases, or clauses. The list in the following sentence consists of parallel noun phrases.

Renewable energy technologies include the following: hydroelectric power, solar power, wind energy, and geothermal energy.

9b Balance parallel ideas presented as pairs.

When pairing ideas, underscore their connection by expressing them in similar grammatical form. Paired ideas are usually connected with coordinating conjunctions, with correlative conjunctions, or with *than* or *as*.

Parallel ideas linked with coordinating conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*) link ideas of equal importance. When those ideas are closely parallel in content, they should be expressed in parallel grammatical form.

- **Emily Dickinson's poetry features the use of dashes and** the capitalization of **~~capitalizing~~ common words.**

  The revision balances the nouns *use* and *capitalization*.

- **Many colleges are making SAT scores optional and** encouraging **~~encourage~~ alternative application materials.**

  The revision balances the verb *making* with the verb *encouraging*.

Parallel ideas linked with correlative conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions come in pairs: *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, *not only . . . but also*, *both . . . and*, *whether . . . or*. Make sure that the grammatical structure following the second half of the pair is the same as that following the first half.

- **Thomas Edison was not only a prolific inventor but also ~~was~~ a successful entrepreneur.**

  The words *a prolific inventor* follow *not only*, so *a successful entrepreneur* should follow *but also*.

- **The clerk told me either to change my flight or** to **take the train.**

  To change my flight, which follows *either*, should be balanced with *to take the train*, which follows *or*.

Comparisons linked with *than* or *as*

In comparisons linked with *than* or *as*, the elements being compared should be expressed in parallel grammatical structure.

► **For some situations, it is easier to talk on the phone than ~~texting.~~ to text.**

To talk is balanced with *to text*.

Comparisons should also be logical and complete. (See 10c.)

9c Repeat function words to clarify parallels.

Function words such as prepositions (*by, to*) and subordinating conjunctions (*that, because*) signal the grammatical nature of the word groups to follow. Although you can sometimes omit function words, be sure to include them whenever they signal parallel structures that readers might otherwise miss.

► **Our study revealed that left-handed students were more likely to have trouble with classroom desks and that rearranging desks for exam periods was useful.**

A second subordinating conjunction helps readers sort out the two parallel ideas: *that* left-handed students have trouble with classroom desks and *that* rearranging desks was useful.

EXERCISE 9-1 Edit the following sentences to correct faulty parallelism. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

Rowena began her workday by refilling the hand sanitizer stations and set up setting the cash registers.

a. Bluetooth technology is used with personal computers, mobile phones, and listening to audio devices.

b. Hannah told her rock-climbing partner that she bought a new harness and of her desire to climb Otter Cliffs.

c. It is more difficult to sustain an exercise program than starting one.

d. During basic training, I was not only told what to do but also what to think.

e. Jan wanted to drive to the wine country or at least Sausalito.

EXERCISE 9–2 Revise the following paragraph to balance parallel ideas.

Community service can provide tremendous benefits not only for the organization receiving the help but the volunteer providing the help, too. This dual benefit idea is behind a recent move to make community service hours a graduation requirement in high schools across the country. For many nonprofit organizations, seeking volunteers is often smarter financially than to hire additional employees. For many young people, community service positions can help develop empathy, being committed, and leadership. Opponents of the trend argue that volunteerism should not be mandatory, but research shows that community service requirements are keeping students engaged in school and lower dropout rates dramatically. Parents, school administrators, and people who are leaders in the community all seem to favor the new initiatives.

10 Add needed words.

Sometimes writers leave out words without affecting the meaning of the sentence. But often the result is confusing or ungrammatical. Readers need to see at a glance how the parts of a sentence are connected.

FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

Languages sometimes differ in the need for certain words. In particular, be alert for missing articles, verbs, subjects, or expletives. See 29, 30a, and 30b.

10a Add words needed to complete compound structures.

In compound structures, words are often left out for economy: *Horatio is a man who means what he says and* [*who*] *says what*

he means. Such omissions are acceptable as long as the omitted words are common to both parts of the compound structure.

If omitting a word from a sentence would make the sentence ungrammatical because the word is not common to both parts of the compound structure, the word must be left in.

► **Advertisers target customers whom they identify through demographic research or have purchased their product in the past.**

The word *who* must be included because *whom . . . have purchased* is not grammatically correct.

► **Mayor Davis never has and never will accept a bribe.**

Has . . . accept is not grammatically correct.

10b Add the word *that* if there is any danger of misreading without it.

If there is no danger of misreading, the word *that* may be omitted when it introduces a subordinate clause: *The value of a principle is the number of things [that] it will explain.* When a sentence might be misread without *that*, however, include the word.

► **In his famous obedience experiments, psychologist Stanley Milgram discovered ordinary people were willing to inflict physical pain on strangers.**

Milgram didn't discover ordinary people; he discovered that ordinary people were willing to inflict pain on strangers. The word *that* tells readers to expect a clause, not just *ordinary people*, as the direct object of *discovered*.

10c Add words needed to make comparisons logical and complete.

Comparisons should be made between items that are alike. To compare unlike items is illogical and distracting.

▸ **The forests of North America are much more extensive than** those of
Europe.

Forests must be compared with forests, not with all of Europe.

▸ **Some music critics argue that Beyoncé's music videos are better** singer's.
than any other ~~singer.~~

Beyoncé's music videos cannot logically be compared with a singer. The revision uses the possessive form *singer's*, with the words *music videos* being implied.

Sometimes the word *other* must be inserted to make a comparison logical.

other
▸ **Jupiter is larger than any planet in our solar system.**

Jupiter is a planet, and it cannot be larger than itself.

Sometimes the word *as* must be inserted to make a comparison grammatically complete.

as
▸ **The city of Lowell is as old, if not older than, the neighboring city of Lawrence.**

The construction *as old* is not complete without a second *as*: *as old as . . . the neighboring city of Lawrence.*

Comparisons should be complete enough to ensure clarity. The reader should understand what is being compared.

INCOMPLETE	Depression is more common in adolescent girls.
COMPLETE	Depression is more common in adolescent girls than in adolescent boys.

Finally, comparisons should leave no ambiguity for readers. If a sentence lends itself to more than one interpretation, revise the sentence to state clearly which interpretation you intend.

AMBIGUOUS	Ken helped me more than my roommate.
CLEAR	Ken helped me more than *he helped* my roommate.
CLEAR	Ken helped me more than my roommate *did.*

10d Add the articles *a*, *an*, and *the* where necessary for grammatical completeness.

It is not always necessary to repeat articles with paired items: *We bought a laptop and printer.* However, if one of the items requires *a* and the other requires *an*, both articles must be included.

▶ We bought a laptop and an e-reader.

FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

Choosing and using articles can be challenging for some writers. See 29.

EXERCISE 10–1 Add any words needed for grammatical or logical completeness in the following sentences. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

The plumber feared the pipes were completely rusted through.

a. A grapefruit or orange is a good source of vitamin C.
b. The golden eagle's wingspan is nearly as wide as the bald eagle.
c. Looking out the family room window, Sarah saw her favorite tree, which she had climbed as a child, was gone.
d. The graphic designers are interested and knowledgeable about producing posters for the balloon race.
e. The Great Barrier Reef is larger than any coral reef in the world.

11 Untangle mixed constructions.

A mixed construction contains sentence parts that do not sensibly fit together. The mismatch may be a matter of grammar or of logic.

11a Untangle the grammatical structure.

Do not begin a sentence with one grammatical plan and switch without warning to another. Often you must rethink the purpose of the sentence and revise.

MIXED For most drivers who have a blood alcohol content of .05 percent double their risk of causing an accident.

The writer begins the sentence with a long prepositional phrase and makes it the subject of the verb *double*. But a prepositional phrase can serve only as a modifier; it cannot be the subject of a sentence.

REVISED For most drivers who have a blood alcohol content of .05 percent, the risk of causing an accident is doubled.

REVISED Most drivers who have a blood alcohol content of .05 percent double their risk of causing an accident.

In the first revision, the writer begins with the prepositional phrase and finishes the sentence with a proper subject and verb (*risk . . . is doubled*). In the second revision, the writer stays with the original verb (*double*) and begins the sentence another way, making *drivers* the subject of *double*.

▸ Electing
~~When the country elects~~ a president is the most important responsibility in a democracy.

The adverb clause *When the country elects a president* cannot serve as the subject of the verb *is*. The revision replaces the adverb clause with a gerund phrase, a word group that can function as a subject. (See 49b and 49e.)

▸ **Although Luxembourg is a small nation, ~~but~~ it has a rich cultural history.**

The coordinating conjunction *but* cannot link a subordinate clause (*Although Luxembourg. . .*) with an independent clause (*it has a rich cultural history*).

FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

When writing in English, watch out for double subjects, which can happen when a noun and pronoun try to serve the same grammatical function in a sentence. See 30c.

▶ **My father ~~he~~ moved to Peru before he met my mother.**

Also take care not to repeat an object or adverb in an adjective clause. See 30d.

11b Straighten out the logical connections.

A subject and its verb should make sense together; when they don't, the error is known as *faulty predication.*

▶ **Under the revised plan, first-generation college students, ~~who now receive financial aid benefits,~~** financial-aid benefits for ^ **will increase.**

The benefits, not the students, will increase.

An appositive is a noun that renames a nearby noun. When an appositive and the noun it renames are not logically equivalent, the error is known as *faulty apposition.* (See 49c.)

▶ Tax accounting, **~~The tax accountant,~~ a very lucrative profession, requires** ^ **intelligence, patience, and attention to mathematical detail.**

The tax accountant is a person, not a profession.

11c Avoid *is when, is where,* and *reason . . . is because* constructions.

Sentences with *is when, is where,* and *reason . . . is because* constructions are often ungrammatical or illogical and should be avoided. Grammatically, the verb *is* (as well as *are, was,* and *were*) should be followed by a noun or an adjective, not by an adverb clause beginning with *when, where,* or *because.*

Logically, the words *when*, *where*, and *because* suggest relations of time, place, and cause — relations that do not always make sense with *is*, *are*, *was*, or *were*.

▸ **Anorexia nervosa is ~~where people~~ a disorder suffered by people who think they are overweight and diet to the point of starvation.**

Where refers to places. Anorexia nervosa is a disorder, not a place.

▸ **The ~~reason the~~ experiment failed ~~is~~ because conditions in the lab were not sterile.**

The adverb clause beginning with *because* properly modifies the verb *failed*.

EXERCISE 11-1 Edit the following sentences to untangle mixed constructions. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

~~By taking~~ Taking the oath of allegiance made Ling a US citizen.

a. Using surgical gloves is a precaution now worn by dentists to prevent contact with patients' blood and saliva.

b. A physician, the career my brother is pursuing, requires at least ten years of challenging work.

c. The reason the pharaohs had bad teeth was because tiny particles of sand found their way into Egyptian bread.

d. Recurring bouts of flu among team members set a record for number of games forfeited.

e. In this box contains the key to your future.

12 Repair misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Modifiers should point clearly to the words they modify. As a rule, related words should be kept together.

12a Put limiting modifiers in front of the words they modify.

Limiting modifiers such as *only*, *even*, *almost*, *nearly*, and *just* should appear in front of a verb only if they modify the verb:

At first, I couldn't even touch my toes, much less grasp them. If they limit the meaning of some other word in the sentence, they should be placed in front of that word.

▶ **Research shows that students ~~only~~ learn new vocabulary words only when they are encouraged to read.**

Only limits the meaning of the *when* clause.

▶ **If you ~~just~~ interview just chemistry majors, your understanding of the student response to the new policies will be incomplete.**

The adverb *just* limits the meaning of *chemistry majors*, not *interview*.

When the limiting modifier *not* is misplaced, the sentence usually suggests a meaning the writer did not intend.

▶ **In the United States in 1860, all Black southerners were ~~not~~ enslaved.**

The original sentence says that no Black southerners were enslaved. The revision is clear and accurate.

12b Place phrases and clauses so that readers can see what they modify.

Although phrases and clauses can appear at some distance from the words they modify, make sure your meaning is clear. When phrases or clauses are oddly placed, absurd misreadings can result.

MISPLACED The soccer player returned to the clinic where he had undergone emergency surgery in 2019 in a limousine sent by Adidas.

REVISED Traveling in a limousine sent by Adidas, the soccer player returned to the clinic where he had undergone emergency surgery in 2019.

The revision corrects the false impression that the soccer player underwent emergency surgery in a limousine.

Occasionally the placement of a modifier leads to an ambiguity—a *squinting modifier*. In such a case, two revisions will be possible, depending on the writer's intended meaning.

AMBIGUOUS The animal shelter at which we volunteered occasionally held adoption events on Saturdays.

It's not clear what happened occasionally, the volunteering or the adoption events. Both revisions eliminate the ambiguity.

CLEAR The animal shelter at which we occasionally volunteered held adoption events on Saturdays.

CLEAR The animal shelter at which we volunteered held adoption events occasionally on Saturdays.

12c Move awkwardly placed modifiers.

A sentence should flow from subject to verb to object, without lengthy detours along the way. When a long adverbial word group separates a subject from its verb, a verb from its object, or a helping verb from its main verb, the result is often awkward.

▸ ~~Jamaica,~~ After more than 300 years of British rule, Jamaica gained its independence in 1962.

There is no reason to separate the subject, *Jamaica*, from the verb, *gained*, with a long phrase.

FOR MULTILINGUAL WRITERS

When writing in English, take care not to place an adverb between a verb and its object. See 30e.

▸ Yolanda lifted easily ~~easily~~ the fifty-pound weight.

12d Avoid split infinitives when they are awkward.

An infinitive consists of *to* plus the base form of a verb: *to think*, *to breathe*, *to dance*. When a modifier appears between *to* and

the verb, an infinitive is said to be "split": *to carefully balance, to completely understand.* If a split infinitive is awkward, move the modifier.

▶ If possible, the
~~The~~ patient should try to ~~if possible~~ avoid going up and down
^
stairs.

Attempts to avoid split infinitives can sometimes result in equally awkward sentences. When alternative phrasing sounds unnatural, split the infinitive.

AWKWARD We decided actually to enforce the law.

BETTER We decided to actually enforce the law.

EXERCISE 12-1 Edit the following sentences to correct misplaced or awkwardly placed modifiers. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

in a phone survey
Answering questions can be annoying. ~~in a phone survey.~~
^ ^

a. The manager asked her employees to if they had time submit their reports on Friday.
b. Many students graduate with debt from college totaling more than fifty thousand dollars.
c. It is a myth that humans only use 10 percent of their brains.
d. Daria found the old nightgown she used to wear to sleep in the closet.
e. All geese do not fly beyond Narragansett for the winter.

12e Repair dangling modifiers.

A dangling modifier fails to refer logically to any word in the sentence. Dangling modifiers are easy to repair, but they can be hard to recognize, especially in your own writing.

Recognizing dangling modifiers

Dangling modifiers are usually word groups (such as verbal phrases) that suggest but do not name an actor. When a sentence opens with such a modifier, readers expect the subject of the next clause to name the actor. If it doesn't, the modifier dangles.

Although most readers will understand the writer's intended meaning in such sentences, the unintended humor can be distracting.

The following sentences illustrate four common kinds of dangling modifiers.

DANGLING *Deciding to join the navy*, the recruiter enthusiastically pumped Jing-mei's hand. [Participial phrase]

DANGLING *Upon entering the doctor's office*, a skeleton caught my attention. [Preposition followed by a gerund phrase]

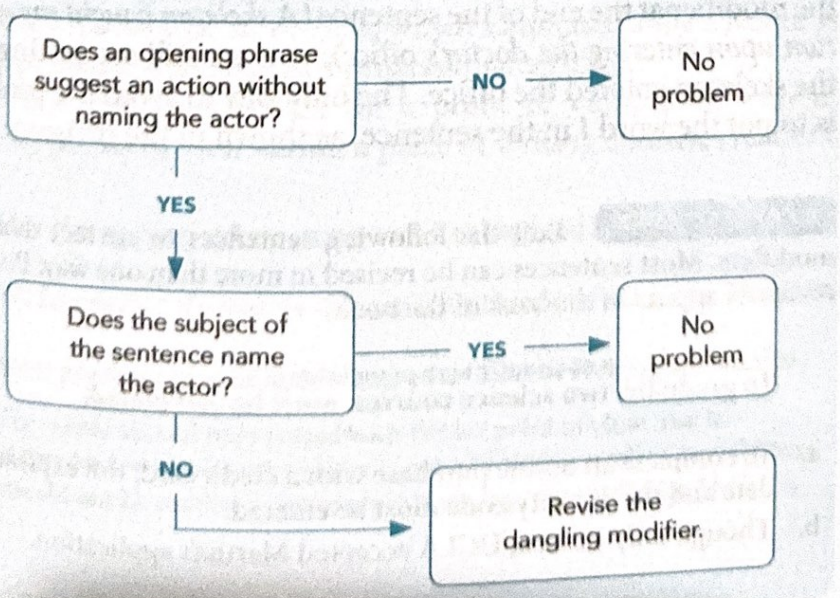
DANGLING *To satisfy her mother*, the piano had to be practiced every day. [Infinitive phrase]

DANGLING *Though not eligible for the clinical trial*, the doctor prescribed the drug for Ethan on compassionate grounds. [Elliptical clause with an understood subject and verb]

These dangling modifiers falsely suggest that the recruiter decided to join the navy, that the skeleton entered the doctor's office, that the piano intended to satisfy the mother, and that the doctor was not eligible for the clinical trial.

Check your writing for dangling modifiers using the chart below.

CHECKING FOR DANGLING MODIFIERS



Repairing dangling modifiers

To repair a dangling modifier, you can revise the sentence in one of two ways: by naming the actor in the subject of the sentence, or by naming the actor in the modifier. Depending on your sentence, one of these revision strategies may be more appropriate than the other.

ACTOR NAMED IN SUBJECT

I noticed
▶ **Upon entering the doctor's office, a skeleton. ~~caught my attention.~~**

Jo had to practice
▶ **To satisfy her mother, the piano ~~had to be practiced~~ every day.**

ACTOR NAMED IN MODIFIER

When Jing-mei decided
▶ **~~Deciding~~ to join the navy, the recruiter enthusiastically pumped ~~Jing-mei's~~ her hand.**

Ethan was
▶ **Though not eligible for the clinical trial, the doctor prescribed the drug for ~~Ethan~~ him on compassionate grounds.**

NOTE: You cannot repair a dangling modifier just by moving it. Consider, for example, the sentence about the skeleton. If you put the modifier at the end of the sentence (*A skeleton caught my attention upon entering the doctor's office*), you are still suggesting that the skeleton entered the office. The only way to avoid the problem is to put the word *I* in the sentence, as shown in the revision.

EXERCISE 12–2 Edit the following sentences to correct dangling modifiers. Most sentences can be revised in more than one way. Possible revisions appear in the back of the book.

a student must complete
To graduate, two science courses. ~~must be completed.~~

a. To complete an online purchase with a credit card, the expiration date and the security code must be entered.

b. Though only sixteen, UCLA accepted Martha's application.

c. Settled in the cockpit, the pounding of the engine was muffled only slightly by my helmet.

d. After studying polymer chemistry, computer games seemed less complex to Letitia.

e. When a young man, my mother enrolled me in ballet and tap dance classes.

13 Eliminate distracting shifts.

Shifts in point of view, in verb tense, in mood or voice, or from indirect to direct questions or quotations can distract or confuse readers.

13a Make the point of view consistent in person and number.

The point of view in a piece of writing is the perspective from which it is written: first person (*I* or *we*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he*, *she*, *it*, *one*, *they*, or any noun).

The *I* (or *we*) point of view, which emphasizes the writer, is a good choice for informal letters and writing based on personal experience. The *you* point of view, which emphasizes the reader, works well for giving advice or explaining how to do something. The third-person point of view, which emphasizes the subject, is appropriate in academic and professional writing.

Once you have settled on a point of view, stick with it. Shifting points of view within a piece of writing confuses readers.

▸ **Our class practiced rescuing a victim trapped in a wrecked car. We learned to dismantle the car with the essential tools. ~~You~~ were graded on ~~your~~ our speed and ~~your~~ our skill in freeing the victim.**

The writer should have stayed with the *we* point of view. *You* is inappropriate because the writer is not addressing readers directly. *You* should not be used in a vague sense meaning "anyone." (See 23d.)