MISPLACED MODIFIERS

A misplaced modifier is a modifying word, phrase, or clause that does not point clearly and directly to what it is supposed to modify. Recognize and correct the following kinds of misplacement.

Misplaced Word: He almost decided to eat half the pie for supper.
Revised: He decided to eat almost half the pie for supper.
Note: Other words of this type likely to be misplaced: even, hardly, just, merely, only, scarcely.

Misplaced Phrase: My girlfriend made it clear why we were breaking up on Tuesday.
Revised: On Tuesday, my girlfriend made it clear why we were breaking up.

Misplaced Clause: The paint job is not dry that they did yesterday.
Revised: The paint job that they did yesterday is not dry.

A squinting modifier is a special type of misplacement referring both to what precedes and what follows it.

Squinting Modifier: To be complimented often pleases a performer.
Revised: It often pleases a performer to be complimented. or It pleases a performer to be complimented often.

*PRACTICE YOUR SKILLS: PRACTICE SHEET IS ON NEXT PAGE.*
PRACTICE SHEET

Correct the following misplaced or squinting modifiers:

1. She only liked cherry tomatoes.

2. The doll belongs to my sister whose head is missing.

3. She drove across the desert with a lump in her throat.
4. Professors who teach rarely get rich.

5. She got a job with Macy’s after she left school which lasted for more than fifteen years.

6. Arthur became panicked soon after he married and filed for divorce.

7. The professor told them when the class was over they could ask questions.

8. The mayor announced that he would run for reelection just last Friday.

9. The culprit only confessed when faced with proof of his crime.

10. The boat just docked here last week.

11. A baby was found abandoned in a snowsuit on Park Avenue.

12. George bought a pure Siamese from a friend that was already housebroken.

13. I boarded the train in the State of Connecticut that was heading south.

14. When he stopped reading suddenly they looked up.

15. They knew hardly what to do.