

Grammar Worksheets: Misplaced and Dangling Participles, Answers and Tips

1. Shaken, not stirred, James Bond likes his martinis.

Answer: James Bond likes his martinis shaken, not stirred.

Teaching Tip: Although most students will be too young to get the allusion, some may have heard of James Bond, and sometimes it gets a laugh. It's an icebreaker. The point is to place the participle as close to the noun as possible to avoid ambiguity.

As it is originally written, the sentence reads as if James Bond is the one who is "shaken, not stirred." The martinis are "shaken, not stirred," not Bond, so the participle should be next to

2. While driving to the Homestead Campus, a pillow fell from James's car.

Answer 1: While driving to the Homestead Campus, James dropped a pillow from his car.

Answer 2: While James drove to the Homestead Campus, a pillow fell from his car.

Answer 3: A pillow fell from James's car as he drove to the Homestead Campus.

Teaching Tip: Here we have three revisions. The first one maintains the integrity of the introductory participial phrase. The "ing" phrase must modify the first noun it gets to, so we place "James" as the subject because he is the one who is "driving to the Homestead Campus."

In the second and third sentences, the writer creates a dependent clause from the participial phrase. Creating a dependent clause is always a safe way to go.

3. Shocked by the foul language on television, the remote control dropped from Aunt Sherry's hand.

Answer 1: Shocked by the foul language on television, Aunt Sherry dropped the remote control.

Answer 2: Because Aunt Sherry was shocked by the foul language on television, she dropped the remote control.

Answer 3: Aunt Sherry dropped the remote control because she was shocked by the foul language on television.

Answer 4 (less desirable, but correct): Aunt Sherry, shocked by the foul language on television, dropped the remote control.

Teaching Tip: Clearly, the remote control is not "shocked by the foul language on television"; Aunt Sherry is. The last answer is less desirable because it separates the subject (Aunt Sherry) from the verb (dropped). Try not to do this.

4. Running across Tropical Park, the paddle boats on the lake appeared to be floating on air.

Answer 1: Running across Tropical Park, I thought I could see the paddle boats on the lake floating on air.

Teaching Tip: Sometimes to correct a misplaced or dangling modifier (and clarify the meaning), the writer must change the words in a sentence. The point is that the introductory participial phrase modifies the first noun it gets to in the base sentence, so "running" corresponds to "I."

Answer 2: As I ran across Tropical Park, the paddle boats on the lake appeared to be floating on air.

Teaching Tip: This is probably a very good approach, since the sentence keeps the original meaning intact. Having a dependent clause with a clear subject and verb eliminates most dangling or misplaced modifier problems.

5. Attacked by the school bully, the backpack fell from Abner's shoulder.

Answer 1: When he was attacked by the school bully, the backpack fell from Abner's shoulder.

Teaching Tip: Again, we converted the participial phrase into a dependent clause with "he" as the subject and "attacked" as the main verb.

Answer 2: Attacked by the school bully, Abner dropped his backpack.

6. Walking barefoot through the tall grass, dew drops felt good between my toes.

Answer 1: Walking barefoot through the tall grass, I could feel the dew drops between my toes.

Teaching Tip: Here we lose the "felt good" words, but the meaning is retained because of the wording. It's subjective, though.

Answer 2: As I walked barefoot through the tall grass, dew drops felt good between my toes.

7. Driven by insatiable ambition and greed, the computer ran Henry's stock trading program all day.

Answer 1: Driven by insatiable ambition and greed, Henry ran his stock trading program all day.

Teaching Tip: Obviously, the computer is not "driven by insatiable ambition and greed."

Answer 2: Since Henry is driven by insatiable ambition and greed, the computer runs the stock trading program all day.

Teaching Tip: In this sentence, a shift in tense works. Allow the students to change the sentence, but encourage them to retain as much of the original meaning as possible.

Answer 3: Henry, driven by insatiable ambition and greed, ran his stock trading program on the computer all day.

8. Confused by the new layout of the house, the soiled diaper fell off the baby as he cried and ran from room to room.

Answer 1: Confused by the new layout of the house, the baby cried and ran from room to room, dropping a soiled diaper on the way.

Teaching Tip: As the sentence is originally written, it seems as if the soiled diaper is “confused by the new layout of the house. The revised sentence rearranges the words, maintains the original meaning, and still keeps an introductory participial phrase.

Answer 2: Because he was confused by the new layout of the house, the soiled diaper fell off the baby as he cried and ran from room to room.

Answer 3: The baby, confused by the new layout of the house, dropped the soiled diaper as he cried and ran from room to room.

9. Staring up at the tall buildings, the wallet fell from Jasmine’s purse.

Answer 1: Staring up at the tall buildings, Jasmine dropped the wallet from her purse.

Teaching Tip: Some students will be tempted to write, “Staring up at the tall buildings, Jasmine’s wallet fell from her purse.” This would be wrong because “Jasmine’s wallet” is still a wallet, and the wallet is not “staring up at the tall buildings.” A possessive form does not “fix” a misplaced modifier. If a student keeps the introductory participial phrase, the first noun in the base sentence must be “Jasmine,” not “Jasmine’s wallet.”

Answer 2: As she stared up at the tall buildings, the wallet fell from Jasmine’s purse.

Answer 3: As Jasmine stared up at the tall buildings, the wallet fell from her purse.

Worksheet 2, 17 Exercises

1. Upset with the boys' constant bickering, the car veered into a ditch as the father turned to scold the children.

Answer 1: Upset with the boys' constant bickering, **the father** turned to scold the children as the car veered into a ditch.

Answer 2: Because the father was upset with the boys' constant bickering, **he** turned to scold the children as the car veered into a ditch.

2. Collecting photographic and physical evidence at the scene, the briefcase bulged with documents when the prosecutor returned to her office.

Answer 1: Collecting photographic and physical evidence at the scene, **the prosecutor returned to the office** with her briefcase bulging with documents.

Answer 2: After the prosecutor collected photographic and physical evidence at the scene, **she returned** to her office, briefcase bulging with documents.

3. Peeing constantly on the kitchen throw rug, the maid got frustrated from cleaning up after the new puppy.

Answer 1: Because the new puppy peed constantly on the kitchen throw rug, the maid got frustrated from cleaning up after it.

Answer 2: Peeing constantly on the kitchen throw rug, **the new puppy upset** the maid **who** got frustrated from cleaning up after it.

Answer 3: The maid got frustrated from cleaning up after the new puppy because it kept peeing on the kitchen throw rug.

4. Elated at the thought of his new job, the cell phone dropped from Gus's hands as he ran to tell Karen.

Answer 1: Gus dropped the cell phone as he ran to tell Karen about his new job.

Answer 2: Elated at the thought of his new job, **Gus dropped** the cell phone as he ran to tell Karen.

Answer 3: Because he was elated at the thought of his new job, the cell phone dropped from Gus's hands as he ran to tell Karen.

5. Delighted with the response from the audience, the curtain fell on Kristen.

Answer 1: Delighted with the response from the audience, **Kristen groaned as** the curtain fell on **her**.

Answer 2: Kristen was delighted with the response from the audience, **but she groaned in horror as** the curtain fell on her.

6. Dividing her time between caring for aging parents and managing her household, it was difficult for Jill to get a full-time job.

Answer 1: Dividing her time between caring for aging parents and managing her household, **Jill found it** difficult to get a full-time job.

Answer 2: **Because she** divided her time between caring for aging parents and managing her household, it was difficult for Jill to get a full-time job.

Answer 3: **Jill found it** difficult to get a full-time job **because she** divided her time between caring for aging parents and managing her household.

7. Keeping mostly to herself, the orchid hung limply from Casey's dress at the prom.

Answer 1: **Casey kept** mostly to herself, **as** the orchid hung limply from **her** dress at the prom.

Answer 2: **Casey kept** mostly to herself, the orchid **hanging** limply from **her** dress at the prom.

8. Smiling from ear to ear, it was obvious that Karen was happy with Rick's decision.

Answer 1: Smiling from ear to **ear**, **Karen** was happy with Rick's decision.

Answer 2: **Karen** smiled from ear to ear because she was happy with Rick's decision.

9. Dismissed from his position at the law firm, the Ferrari spun out of control as Ken sped away in a rage.

Answer 1: Dismissed from his position at the law firm, **Ken** sped away in a rage and the Ferrari spun out of control.

Answer 2: **After he was** dismissed from his position at the law firm, the Ferrari spun out of control as Ken sped away in a rage.

10. Running two miles a day during the fall, the uniform jersey hung loose on Ivan when lacrosse season began.

Answer 1: **Because Ivan ran** two miles a day during the fall, the uniform jersey hung loose on him when lacrosse season began.

Answer 2: The uniform jersey hung loose on Ivan when lacrosse season began **because he had** run two miles a day during the fall.

11. Fearing allegations of child abuse, the infant was placed in foster care.

Answer 1: Because the adoptive parents feared allegations of child abuse, the infant was placed in foster care.

Answer 2: Fearing allegations of child abuse, **the Department of Children and Families** placed the infant in foster care.

12. Excited at the prospect of visiting Greece, a smile graced Ceci's face as she drove to the airport.

Answer 1: Excited at the prospect of visiting Greece, **Ceci smiled** as she drove to the airport.

Answer 2: The prospect of visiting Greece **made Ceci** smile as she drove to the airport.

13. Singing at the top of his lungs, it reminded Evan of his days with the church choir.

Answer 1: When he sang at the top of his lungs, Evan was reminded of his days with the church choir.

Answer 2: Singing at the top of his lungs, Evan **remembered** his days with the church choir.

Answer 3: Singing at the top of his **lungs reminded** Evan of his days with the church choir.

14. Having been absent for two consecutive days, the attendance clerk required a doctor's note.

Answer 1: Because Chris was absent for two consecutive days, the attendance clerk required a doctor's note.

Answer 2: Having been absent for two consecutive days, **Chris had to give** the attendance clerk a doctor's note.

15. Finishing a page from a Disney Princess coloring book, the petals on the flowers were a light shade of pink.

Answer 1: When Cristina finished a page from a Disney Princess coloring book, the petals on the flowers were a light shade of pink.

Answer 2: Finishing a page from a Disney Princess coloring book, **Cristina had colored** the petals on the flowers a light shade of pink.

16. Fishing off the Seven Mile Bridge, the power boat almost ripped Peter's line as it sped by.

Answer 1: While he was fishing off the Seven Mile Bridge, the power boat almost ripped Peter's line as it sped by.

Answer 2: Fishing off the Seven Mile Bridge, **Peter felt** the power boat almost rip **his** line as it sped by.

17. Arriving in the dorms two weeks early, the room was clean and ready when Will's roommate arrived.

Answer 1: Arriving in the dorms two weeks early, **Will had the room clean and ready by the time his** roommate arrived.

Answer 2: Because Will arrived in the dorms two weeks early, the room was clean and ready when **his** roommate arrived.