

USING MODIFIERS IN SENTENCES

When we mention modifiers, we are referring to adjectives and adverbs. Placing modifiers in sentences can be a task which can hurt the sentence quickly. Therefore, one must use caution when placing adjectives and adverbs in a sentence.

1. Some grammarians suggest that you try to keep the verbs together. Technically, this strategy seems appropriate; however, let us consider a few examples:

EX:

You could write:

I **will** quickly **read** the notes before the test.

Or, you could write:

I **will read** the notes before the test quickly.

Or, you could write:

Quickly, I **will read** the notes before the test.

Notice how the second and third examples show the verbs in close proximity to each other (the first does not). Consider: Which sentence seems to read more steadily? Also, consider: Which sentence is easier to understand?

The first sentence is perfectly fine. The second sentence is fine. Heck, even the third sentence is fine. So, do you need to follow the ideal of keeping the verbs closer together? Not really... just be aware of how your constructions affect understanding/readability.

2. Try to keep the modifiers (especially adjectives) in a more "natural" order

EX:

You could write:

The **blonde, tall** woman walked to the deli across the street. (Worse)

Or, you could write

The tall, blonde woman walked to the deli across the street. (Better)

Notice how the second example shows the adjectives in a more "natural" order.

A few grammarians have proposed the following formula for incorporating modifiers in a linear pattern:

Size/Depth/Width/Length + Age + Color + Material Characteristics/National Origin + Noun
Thus,

EX:

Tall, blonde woman

Fat, yellow dog

Small, black cat

Huge, brown table

Deep blue sea

Skinny, old gray-haired poodle

As many note, you may encounter exceptions; however, this pattern represents the tendencies most writers follow.