

# THE MODIFIER

## Recognize a modifier when you find one.

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Modifiers are words, **phrases**, or **clauses** that provide description in **sentences**. Modifiers allow writers to take the experiences that they have in their own heads and transfer this information into the heads of their readers. Essentially, modifiers breathe life into sentences.

Read this "dead" sentence:

Stephen dropped his fork.

Now read what several well-placed modifiers can do:

Poor **Stephen**, who just wanted a nutritious meal to get through his three-hour biology lab, quickly **dropped his fork** on the cafeteria tray, gagging with disgust as a tarantula wiggled out of his cheese omelet, a sight requiring a year of therapy before Stephen could eat eggs again.

Modifiers can be **adjectives**, **adjective clauses**, **adverbs**, **adverb clauses**, **absolute phrases**, **infinitive phrases**, **participle phrases**, and **prepositional phrases**.

The sentence above contains at least one example of each:

Adjective = ***poor***.

Adjective clause = ***who just wanted a nutritious meal***.

Adverb = ***quickly***.

Adverb clause = ***as a tarantula wiggled out of his cheese omelet***.

Absolute phrase = ***a sight requiring a year of therapy before Stephen could eat eggs again***.

Infinitive phrase = ***to get through his three-hour biology lab***.

Participle phrase = ***gagging with disgust***.

Prepositional phrase = ***on the cafeteria tray***.

Without modifiers, sentences would be no fun to read. Carefully chosen, well-placed modifiers allow you to provide as much accuracy as words will allow.

