

SENTENCE BUILDING: MODIFIERS

Modifiers are sentence parts that can add to the bare minimum required for a complete sentence. They help us fill in details. They provide us with various ways of expanding a simple sentence.

Bare Bones: The tourists stared.

Expanded: The *tired* tourists *in the dusty bus* stared *at the roadblock*.

Bare Bones: An avalanche hit the village.

Expanded: An avalanche *of skiers* hit the *sleepy* village *on weekends*.

The following are the most common kinds of modifiers:

- (1) **Any noun in a sentence may be modified by an adjective that tells us which one or what kind.** Usually the adjective comes immediately before the noun: the *red* barn, a *quiet* street.

Adjectives: The *new* manager gave *angry* customers a *patient* hearing.
Her *favorite* author told *colorful* stories about the *Old West*.

Fill in the blanks in the following sentences. Use only words that would fit in after *very*: *very happy*, *very true*, *very short*, *very expensive*, *very courageous*.

1. Athletes are often _____, _____, and _____.
2. Artists are often _____, _____, or _____ individuals.
3. Buyers today look for _____, _____, _____, and _____ cars.
4. Failure may put people in a very _____, _____, or _____.
5. _____, _____, or _____ people usually do well in the business world.

- (2) **Adverbs usually go with a verb and tell us how, when, and where:** talked *angrily*, called *yesterday*, went *upstairs*. Sometimes adverbs modify another modifier: *extremely* angry, a *barely* audible whisper. (Sometimes adverbs modify a noun: the tenant *downstairs*, her office *downtown*.) Most adverbs, but not all, have the *-ly* ending.

Adverbs:

How?: quickly, reluctantly, smoothly, cheerfully, considerably, cautiously

When?: soon, early, tomorrow, yesterday, immediately, always, rarely

Where?: here, there, upstairs, down, abroad, ahead, outside, somewhere

Fill in appropriate adverbs in the blanks in the following sentences.

6. The human arm can move _____, _____, _____, and _____. (HOW?)
7. We can make the same request _____, _____, or _____. (HOW?)
8. Motorist drive _____, _____, _____, or _____. (HOW?)
9. The answer to your letter may arrive _____, _____, _____, or _____. (WHEN?)
10. She may have left the package _____, _____, _____, or _____. (WHERE?)

- (3) **Prepositions are words like at, in, of, from, by, with, without, on, under, behind, through, around, or about.** They help us bring an additional noun (or pronoun) into a sentence and link it to part of the sentence or to the sentence as a whole. Together, the preposition and the noun that it brings into the sentence make up the **prepositional phrase**.

Prepositional Phrases:

*In the morning, the commuters from the suburbs park in the street or behind our building.
My friend from Toledo waited for me outside the bank in a borrowed car.*

In each of the following sentences, fill in the prepositions needed to complete the prepositional phrases.

11. Buses available _____ the terminal go _____ the tunnel _____ the other side _____ the river.
12. Barefooted customers or people _____ shirts were barred _____ the restaurant _____ the management.
13. The spectators _____ the sidelines were angered _____ the decision _____ the referee.
14. People _____ the countryside are flocking _____ Mexico City _____ the rate _____ one thousand a day.
15. We had to drive _____ the car stalled _____ the middle _____ the road.