

Forms of Modifiers

A **modifier** is a word, a phrase, or a clause that makes the meaning of a word or word group more specific. The two kinds of modifiers are *adjectives* and *adverbs*.

One-Word Modifiers

11a. Adjectives *Make the meaning of nouns and pronouns more specific.*

EXAMPLES Peacocks have **colorful** tail feathers. [The adjective *colorful* makes the noun *tail feathers* more specific. *Colorful* tells *what kind* of tail feathers.]
Maurice prefers the **red** one. [The adjective *red* makes the pronoun *one* more specific. *Red* tells *which* one.]
Is the sky **cloudy** this afternoon? [The adjective *cloudy* makes the noun *sky* more specific. *Cloudy* tells *what kind* of sky.]

11b. Adverbs *Make the meaning of verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs more specific.*

EXAMPLES The choir sang **softly**. [The adverb *softly* makes the verb *sang* more specific. *Softly* tells *how* the choir sang.]
The new dress code is **quite** strict! [The adverb *quite* makes the adjective *strict* more specific. *Quite* tells *to what degree* the dress code is strict.]
Isn't breakfast served **really** early at the ranch? [The adverb *really* makes the adverb *early* more specific. *Really* tells *how* early.]

EXERCISE A Underline the correct form of the modifier in parentheses.

Example 1. The cat rested (*lazy*, *lazily*) on its pillow. [The adverb *lazily* makes the verb *rested* more specific. *Lazily* tells *how* the cat rested.]

1. The doctor spoke (*kind*, *kindly*) to the patient. [How did the doctor speak?]
2. The gold coins are (*valuable*, *valuably*).
3. Ahmed seems (*unusual*, *unusually*) happy today.
4. The meeting (*general*, *generally*) lasts one hour.
5. Claire wrote a (*sweet*, *sweetly*) letter to her grandfather.

Phrases Used as Modifiers

Like one-word modifiers, phrases can also be used as adjectives and adverbs.

EXAMPLES Flying through the air, the eagle searched for prey. [The phrase *Flying through the air* acts as an adjective and makes the noun *eagle* more specific.]

The public swimming pool closes at dark. [The phrase *at dark* acts as an adverb. *At dark* makes the meaning of the verb *closes* more specific.]

EXERCISE B Draw an arrow from each underlined phrase to the word it modifies.

Example 1. The contest ends in a few hours. [The phrase *in a few hours* is used as an adverb. It makes the verb *ends* more specific.]

6. The basket of apples was full. [How is the phrase *of apples* used? What word does the phrase make more specific?]
7. Beth came to my house after school.
8. The softball rolled under the bleachers.
9. The office opens at noon.
10. Wearing her bike helmet, she slowly pedaled out of the driveway.

Clauses Used as Modifiers

Like phrases, clauses can also be used as adjectives and adverbs.

EXAMPLES There is the man **whom we saw earlier**. [The clause *whom we saw earlier* acts as an adjective. The clause makes the noun *man* more specific and tells *which* man.]

Rebecca always locks the door **when she leaves the house**. [The clause *when she leaves the house* acts as an adverb. The clause makes the verb *locks* more specific and tells *when* Rebecca locks the door.]

EXERCISE C Draw an arrow from each underlined clause to the word it modifies. Remember: An adjective clause modifies a noun or pronoun. An adverb clause modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb.

Example 1. The CD player that I usually use is not working. [The clause *that I usually use* acts as an adjective. It makes the noun *player* more specific.]

11. Barbara always calls us when she comes to town. [Which word does the clause *when she comes to town* make more specific?]
12. Those shoes are the ones that she prefers.
13. Once the parade was over, everyone went back inside the building.
14. Jim is the student who writes short stories.
15. After we won the debate, we shook hands with the other team.