

Common Errors by Korean Authors

Presented by:

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Editage

About me

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Ph.D. in physiology
published scientific papers including a book chapter
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Scientific Writing



Misconceptions in Scientific Writing

- Fancy writing
- Passive voice is preferred over the active voice
 - Avoid We's and I's altogether
- Only facts should be included



Types of Errors in Manuscript Writing

Punctuation

Comparison

Word
Choice

Grammar

Content

Clarity

Sentence
Structure

Continuity

Session Outline

1. Common Errors in sentence structure
2. Common Errors in word choice
3. Common Errors in comma usage
4. Common Errors by Korean researchers

1. Common Errors in Sentence Structure



Error 1: Sentence fragment

Example: “Removed a cancer-affected tumor weighing 1750 grams from the liver of a 70-year old patient”

“The surgeon removed...”

Error 2: Comma splices

Example: We included a control group and briefed the participants, the results were still unreliable.

We included a control group and briefed the participants. The results were still unreliable.

We included a control group and briefed the participants, but the results were still unreliable.

Error 3: A run-on sentence

Example: We included a control group and briefed the participants the results were still unreliable.

We included a control group and briefed the participants. The results were still unreliable.

We included a control group and briefed the participants, but the results were still unreliable.

Error 4: Sentence shifts

1) a shift in tense

Example: Before the surgery, the surgeons **examine** the report and **reviewed** all the tests that were performed

2) a shift in person

Example: **Each** patient was asked to submit **their** blood sample the next day

Error 5: Faulty modification

Example: “The physicians were also trained to detect lung and breast cancer in breath samples from people collected in tubes.”

*“The physicians were also trained to detect lung and breast cancer **in people by using breath samples collected in tubes.**”*

NOUN STRINGS



What Are Noun Strings?



NOUN + NOUN + ... NOUN

- Contains a noun(s) that modifies another noun

What Are Noun Strings?



blood flow →

cancer treatment →

plasma membrane →



- Contains a noun(s) that modifies another noun

The Problem with Noun Strings

- Overuse of nouns as modifiers cause lack of clarity

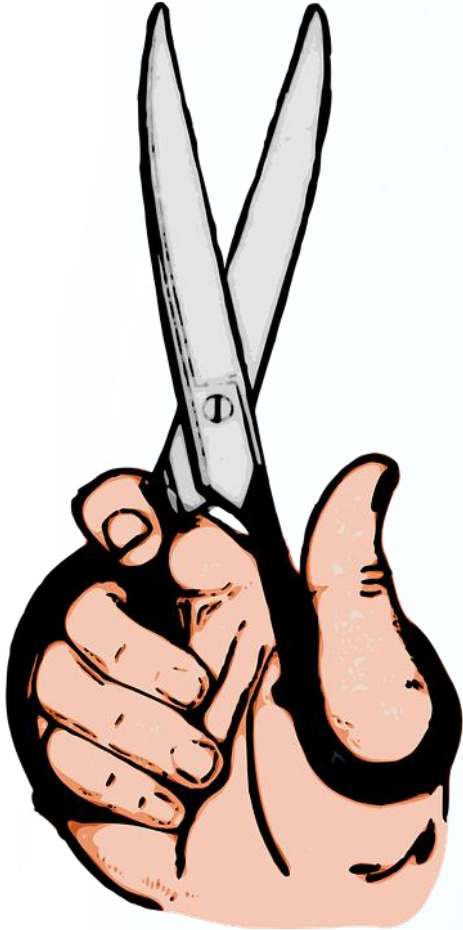
a 15-day-old female mouse embryo
dorsal root ganglia

The Problem with Noun Strings

- Overuse of nouns as modifiers cause lack of clarity

**the dorsal root of the ganglia of a
15-day-old embryo from a female
mouse**

Untangling Noun Strings



1. Expand them using prepositions
2. Turn the modifier noun into its adjective form
3. If you must use noun strings, use hyphens to make them clearer

Example 1

a depression episode

Example 1 – use prepositions

a depression episode

an episode



Example 1 – use adjectives

a depression episode



episode

Which sounds better?

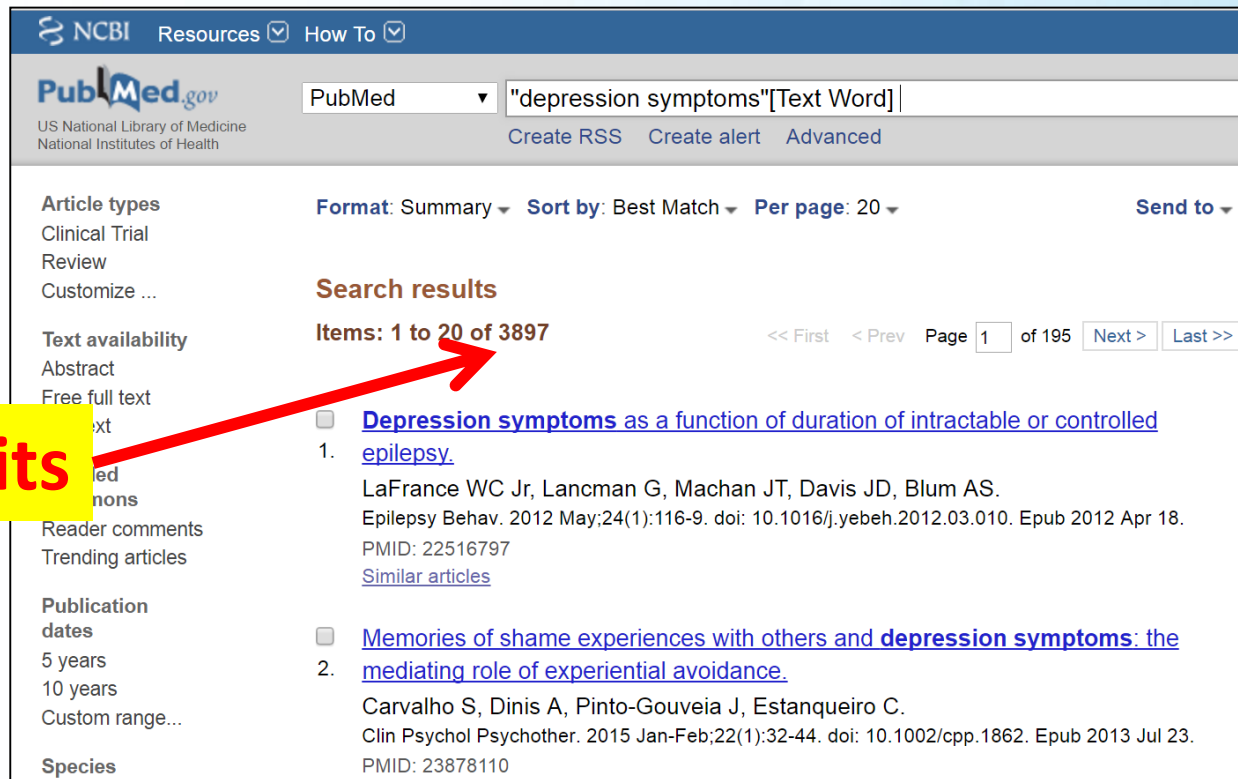
a *depression* episode

VS

a *depressive* episode

Which Sounds Better?

- “depression symptoms” queried in PubMed gives 3897 hits



The screenshot shows the PubMed search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the query "depression symptoms"[Text Word]. Below the search bar, the results are displayed in a list format. The first result is titled "Depression symptoms as a function of duration of intractable or controlled epilepsy." and the second is "Memories of shame experiences with others and depression symptoms: the mediating role of experiential avoidance." The page indicates that there are 3897 items in total, with the current view showing items 1 to 20.

NCBI Resources How To

PubMed.gov
US National Library of Medicine
National Institutes of Health

PubMed "depression symptoms"[Text Word]
Create RSS Create alert Advanced

Article types: Clinical Trial, Review, Customize ...
Text availability: Abstract, Free full text, Full text, Mediated abstracts, Reader comments, Trending articles
Publication dates: 5 years, 10 years, Custom range...
Species

Format: Summary Sort by: Best Match Per page: 20 Send to

Search results
Items: 1 to 20 of 3897

<< First < Prev Page 1 of 195 Next > Last >>

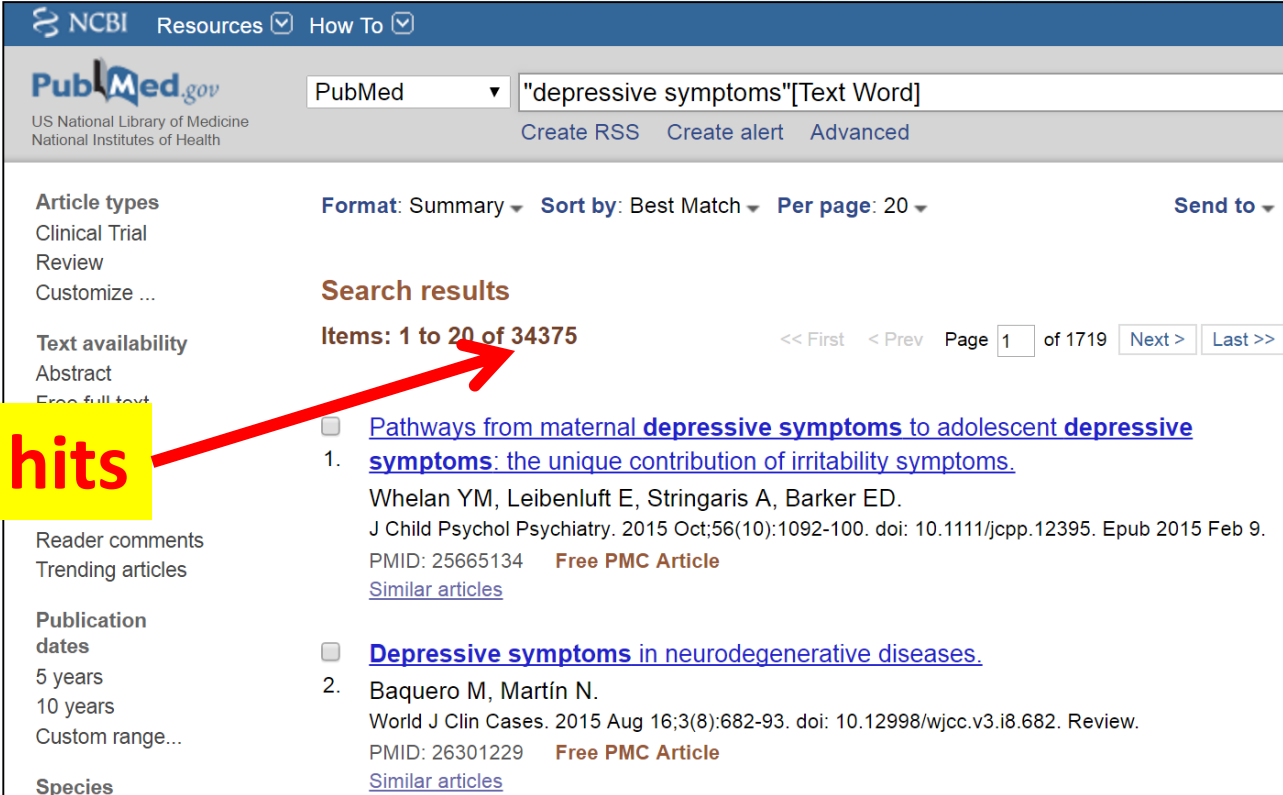
[Depression symptoms as a function of duration of intractable or controlled epilepsy.](#)
LaFrance WC Jr, Lancman G, Machan JT, Davis JD, Blum AS.
Epilepsy Behav. 2012 May;24(1):116-9. doi: 10.1016/j.yebeh.2012.03.010. Epub 2012 Apr 18.
PMID: 22516797
[Similar articles](#)

[Memories of shame experiences with others and depression symptoms: the mediating role of experiential avoidance.](#)
Carvalho S, Dinis A, Pinto-Gouveia J, Estanqueiro C.
Clin Psychol Psychother. 2015 Jan-Feb;22(1):32-44. doi: 10.1002/cpp.1862. Epub 2013 Jul 23.
PMID: 23878110

3897 hits

Which Sounds better?

- “depressive symptoms” queried in PubMed gives 34375 hits



The screenshot shows the PubMed search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the query "depressive symptoms"[Text Word]. Below the search bar, the results are displayed as "Items: 1 to 20 of 34375". A red arrow points from a yellow box containing the text "34375 hits" to the number "34375" in the search results. The search results list two articles:

1. [Pathways from maternal depressive symptoms to adolescent depressive symptoms: the unique contribution of irritability symptoms.](#)
Whelan YM, Leibenluft E, Stringaris A, Barker ED.
J Child Psychol Psychiatry. 2015 Oct;56(10):1092-100. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.12395. Epub 2015 Feb 9.
PMID: 25665134 **Free PMC Article**
[Similar articles](#)
2. [Depressive symptoms in neurodegenerative diseases.](#)
Baquero M, Martin N.
World J Clin Cases. 2015 Aug 16;3(8):682-93. doi: 10.12998/wjcc.v3.i8.682. Review.
PMID: 26301229 **Free PMC Article**
[Similar articles](#)

Example 2

elderly over-the-counter drug users

- ① Find the adjectives in the noun string
- ② Where is the main noun?

Example 2

elderly over-the-counter drug users

- ① “users” is the main noun
- ② “drug” modifies “users”

Example 2 – use prepositions

drug users



users

Example 2 – use prepositions

drug users



users of drugs

a garden of roses

an opener of cans

Example 2

elderly over-the-counter drug users

Example 2 – use prepositions

elderly over-the-counter drug users

elderly users



Examples of Accepted Noun Strings

- community hospital program
- risk factor surveillance system
- baseline CD4 cell counts
- sudden infant death syndrome
- nicotine replacement program
- clinical research organization
- placebo pain medication

three-item or
even four-item
noun strings

Example 3—use hyphens for clarity

Large vessel diseases, including aortic aneurysms and dissections, account for 1–2% of all deaths in Western countries.

Large dissections, however, can completely close the artery, stopping downstream blood flow.

Example 3—use hyphens for clarity

Large vessel diseases, including aortic aneurysms and **dissections**, account for 1–2% of all deaths in Western countries.

Large dissections, however, can completely close the **artery**, stopping downstream blood flow.

Is it the vessels that are large OR dissections that are large?

Example 3—use hyphens for clarity

with hyphen

a large-vessel dissection

→ a dissection of the large vessel

without hyphen

a large vessel dissection

→ a large dissection of the vessel

2. MODIFIERS



Basic Grammar—Concept of Modifiers

Anderson, who claimed to be the missing Anastasia, requested that she be cremated before her death.

Can you spot where the modifier is?

Basic Grammar—Concept of Modifiers

- Bring the modifier as close as possible to what it is modifying

Anderson, who **claimed** to be the missing Anastasia before her death, requested that she be cremated.

Important Principles of Modifiers

1. Place them as close as possible to the word(s) being modified
2. Ensure that the word(s) being modified is actually there

Types of Modifiers

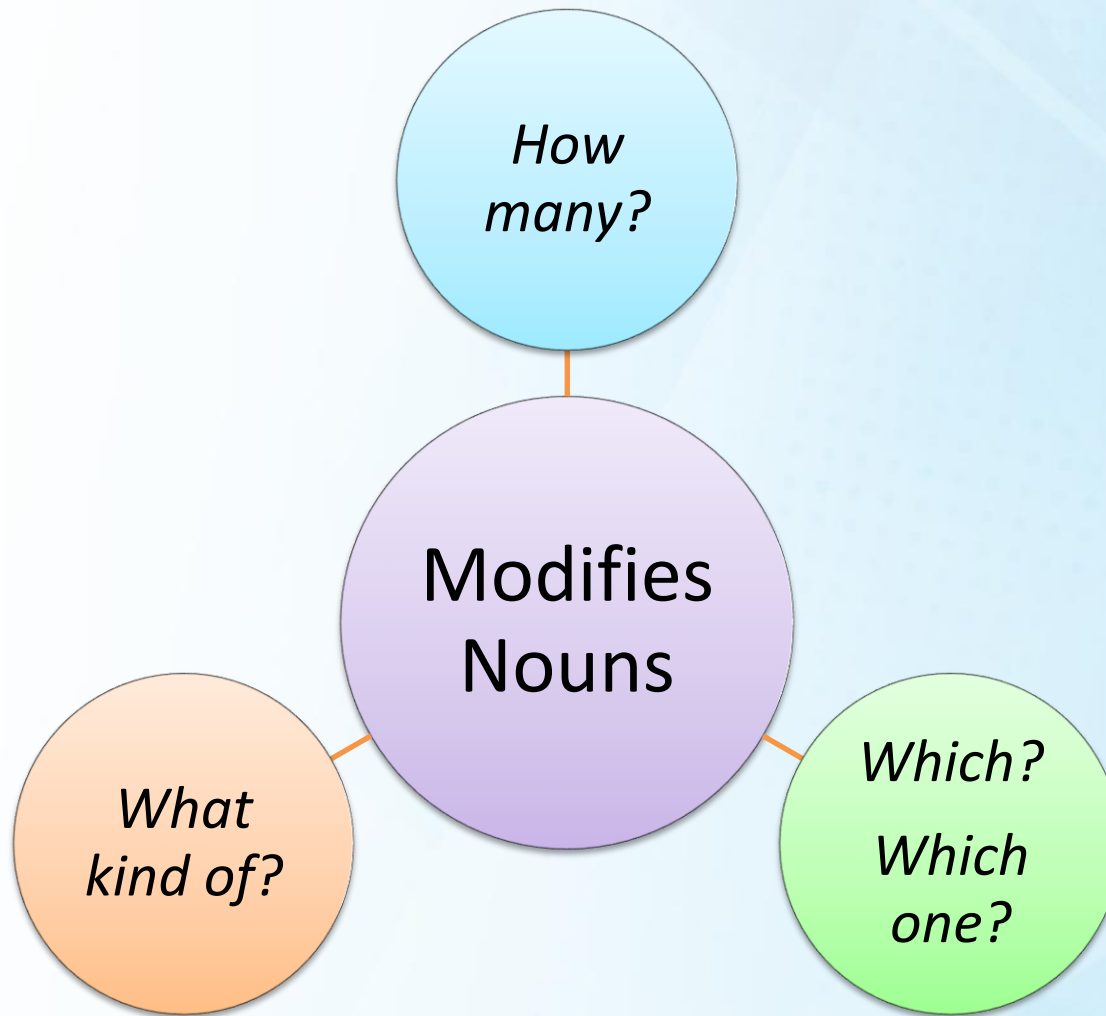
Adjectival modifiers

- Modifies nouns & pronouns
- Participles can only be adjectival modifiers

Adverbial modifiers

- Modifies verbs
- Prepositional phrases

Adjectival Modifiers



Adjectival Modifiers

***participles**

My brother, **who is much older than I am**, is an astronaut.

How many?

There are **eleven** pupils absent.

Modifies
Nouns

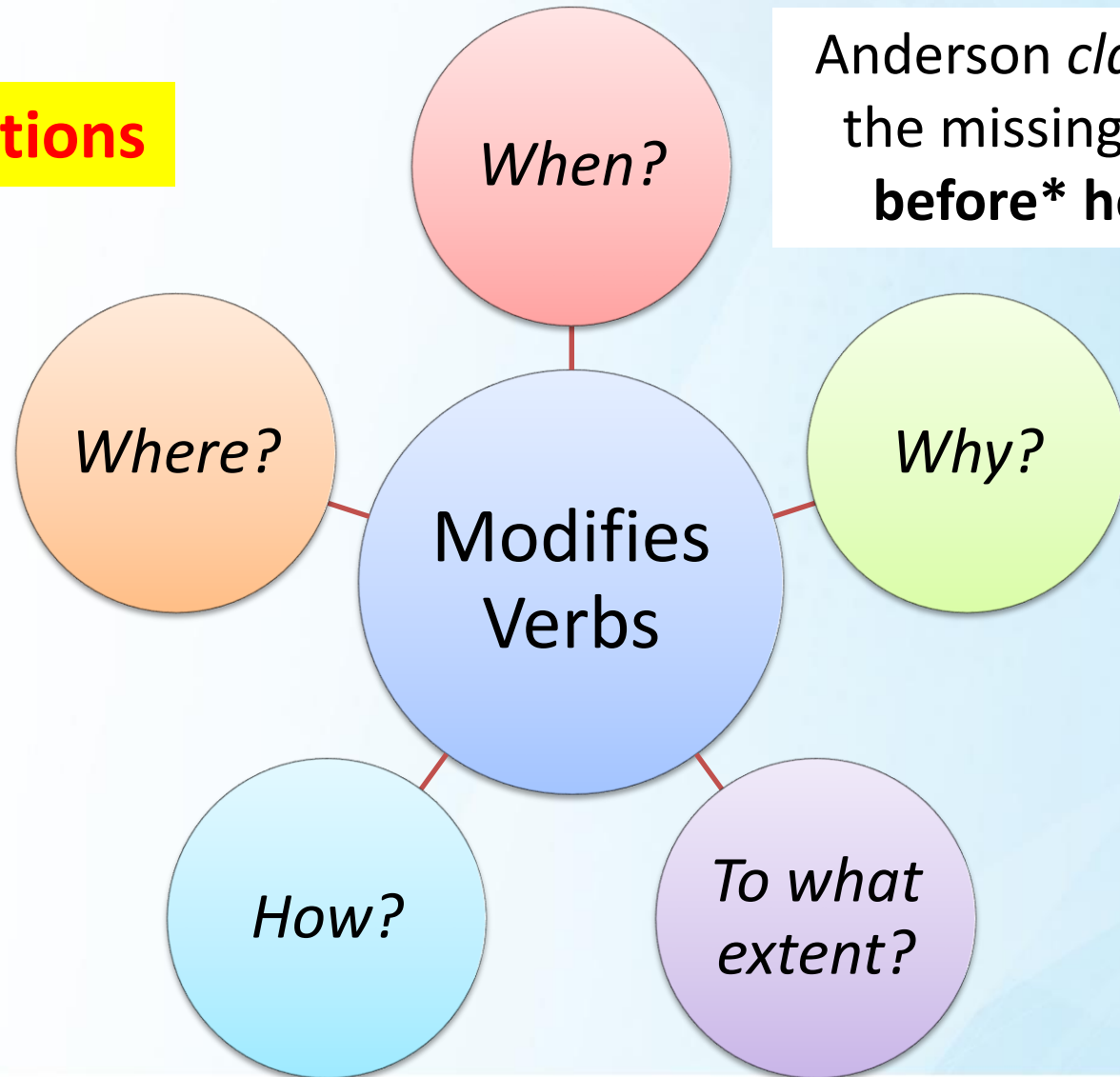
The warehouses ***owned by the Townsons** burnt down.

What kind of?

*Which?
Which one?*

Adverbial Modifiers

***prepositions**



Anderson *claimed* to be the missing Anastasia **before*** her death.

Misuse of Modifiers



Important Principles of Modifiers

1. Place them as close as possible to the word(s) being modified
2. Ensure that the word(s) being modified is actually there

Definitions

Misplaced modifiers

1. A modifier that is not close enough in the sentence to the person, place, or thing that it modifies

Dangling modifiers

2. A modifier that does not have anything in the sentence to modify

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—1

Systemic diseases that may contribute to periodontal diseases such as diabetes should be well controlled.

- Can you find where the modifier is?
- Can you find what is being modified?

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—1

Systemic diseases that may contribute to periodontal diseases such as diabetes **should be well controlled.**

- The subject of the sentence is “Systemic diseases”
- The verb in passive voice is “should be controlled”

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—1

Systemic diseases **that may contribute to periodontal diseases** such as diabetes should be well controlled.

- That-clause modifies the subject
- “may contribute to” is the verb of this clause
- “periodontal diseases” is the object

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—1

Systemic diseases that may contribute to periodontal diseases **such as diabetes** should be well controlled.

- “such as diabetes” is a prepositional phrase that modifies “periodontal diseases”

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—1

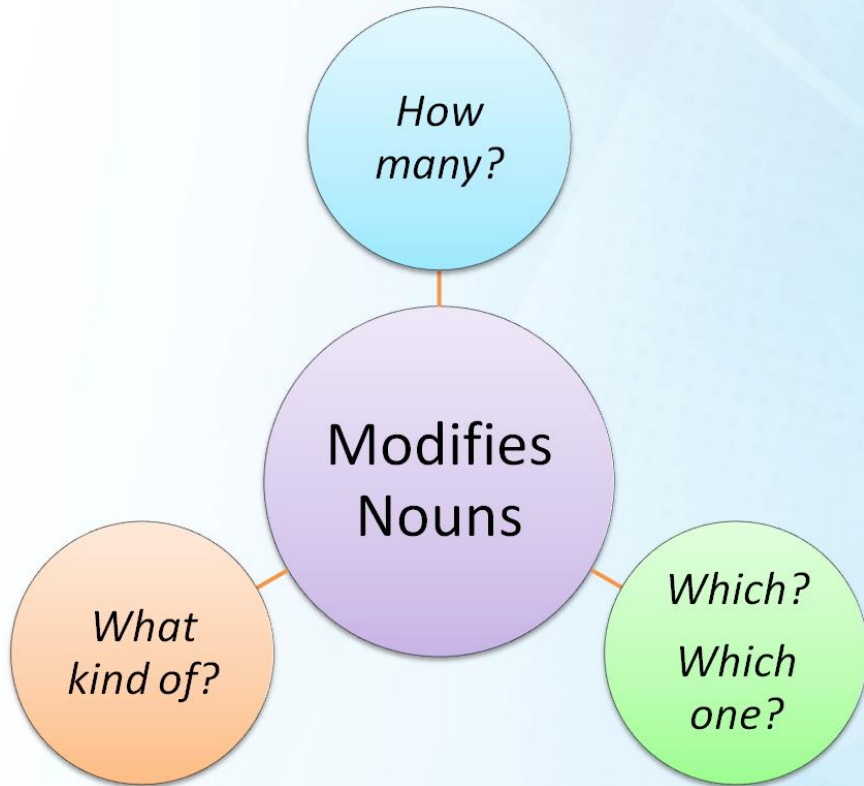
REVISION

Systemic diseases, such as diabetes, that may contribute to periodontal diseases should be well controlled.

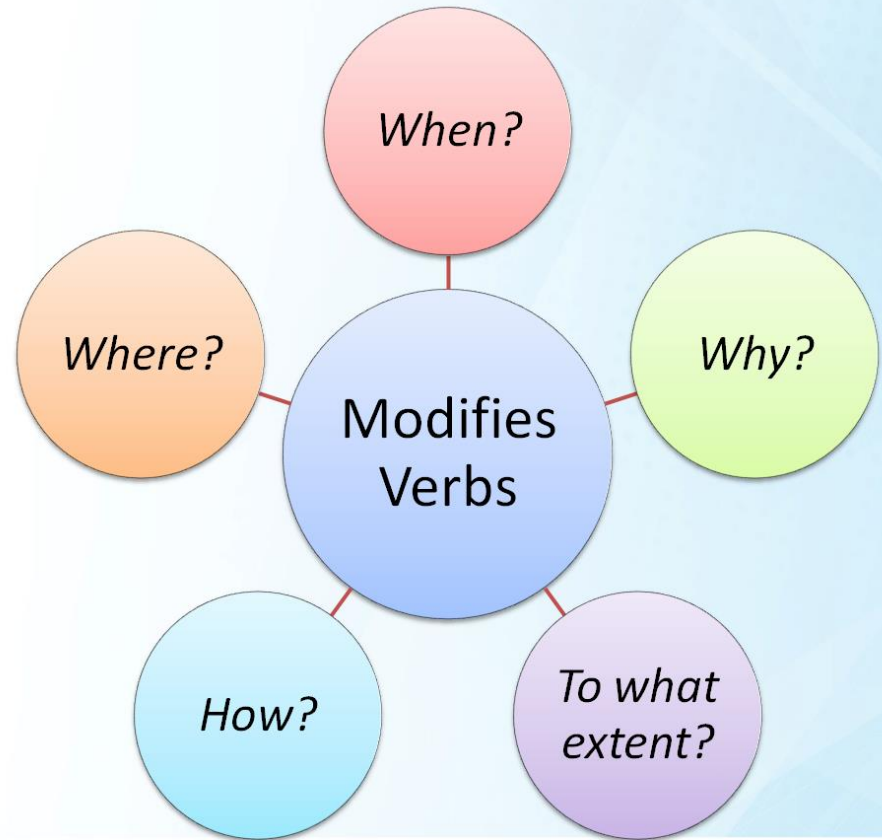
1. Re-structure the sentence
2. Use commas to omit nonrestrictive elements

“such as diabetes”

Adjectival modifiers



Adverbial modifiers



How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—2

We studied serum samples from participants stored in the departmental laboratory.

- Can you spot the modifier?

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—2

We studied serum samples *from participants* stored in the departmental laboratory.

- Prepositional phrase “from participants” describes where the “serum samples” come from

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—2

We studied serum samples from participants *stored in the departmental laboratory*.

Nonsense!

- Participial phrase “stored in the departmental laboratory” describes where the “participants” were stored

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—2

We studied serum samples from participants *stored in the departmental laboratory*.

- “serum samples” not the “participants” were most likely to have been “stored in the departmental laboratory”

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—2

REVISION

We studied serum samples, *stored in the departmental laboratory*, from participants.

How to Find a Misplaced Modifier—2

REVISION

We studied serum samples, *stored in the departmental laboratory*, from participants.

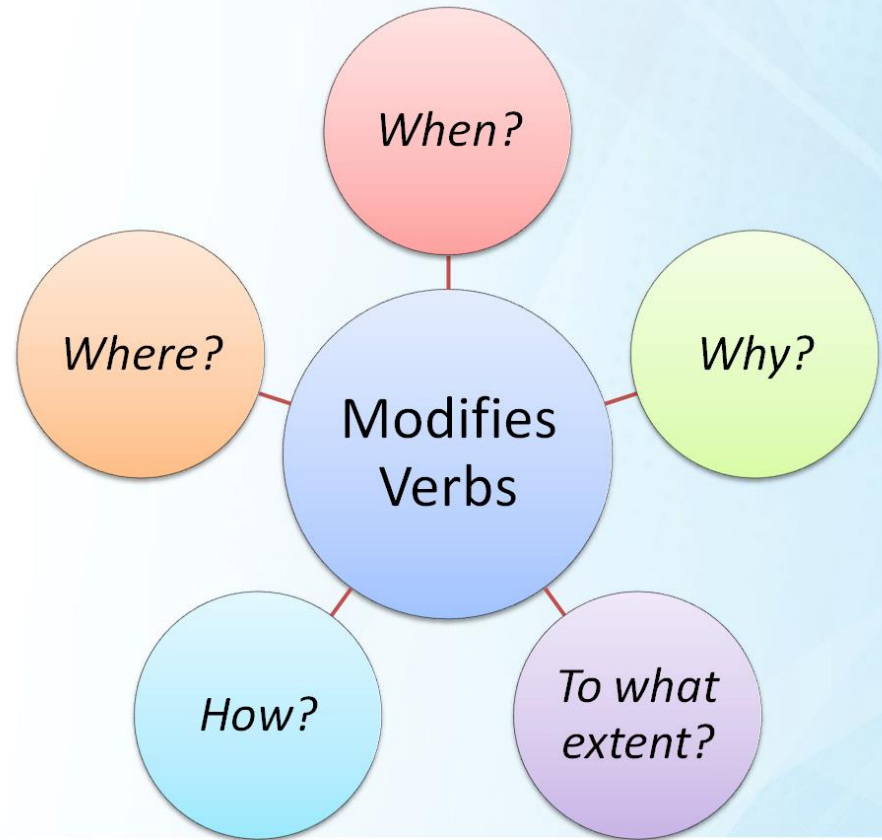
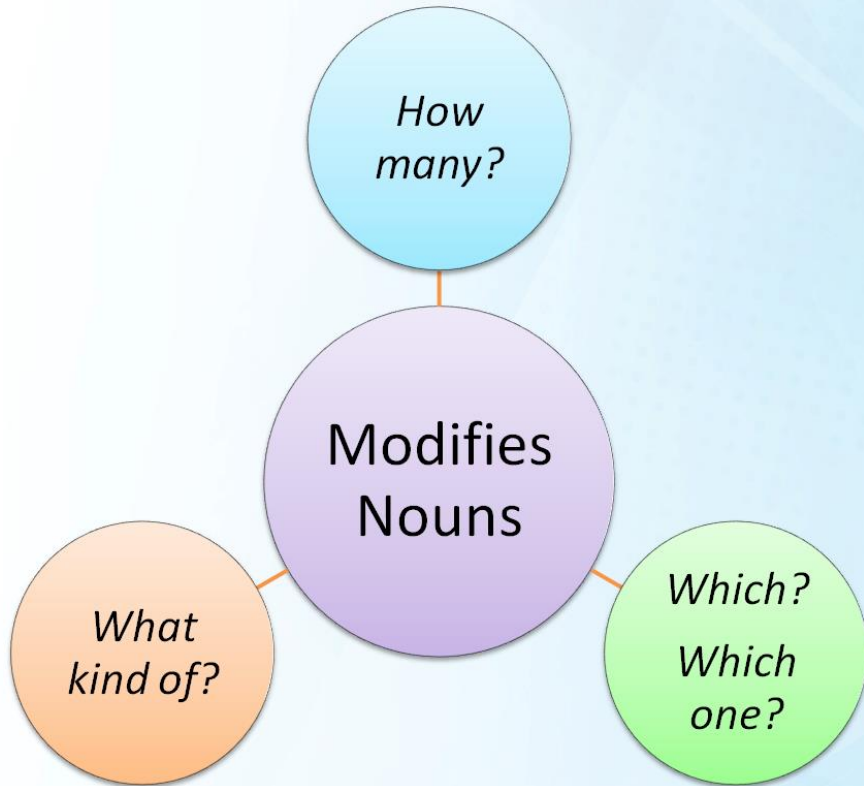
***Better* REVISION**

We studied the participants' serum samples *stored in the departmental laboratory*.

“stored in the departmental laboratory”

Adjectival modifiers

Adverbial modifiers



How to Find a Dangling Modifier

- How can a modifier possibly dangle?



How to Find a Dangling Modifier

As a pediatric oncologist, the opportunity to work with these courageous children is wonderful.

- Can you spot the dangling modifier?

How to Find a Dangling Modifier

As a pediatric oncologist, the opportunity to work with these courageous children is wonderful.

- “As a pediatric oncologist” is the modifier. But what does it modify?
- Who is the pediatric oncologist?

How to Find a Dangling Modifier

As a pediatric oncologist, **the opportunity to work with these courageous children is wonderful.**

- Is the opportunity “a pediatric oncologist”?
- Are the children “pediatric oncologists”?

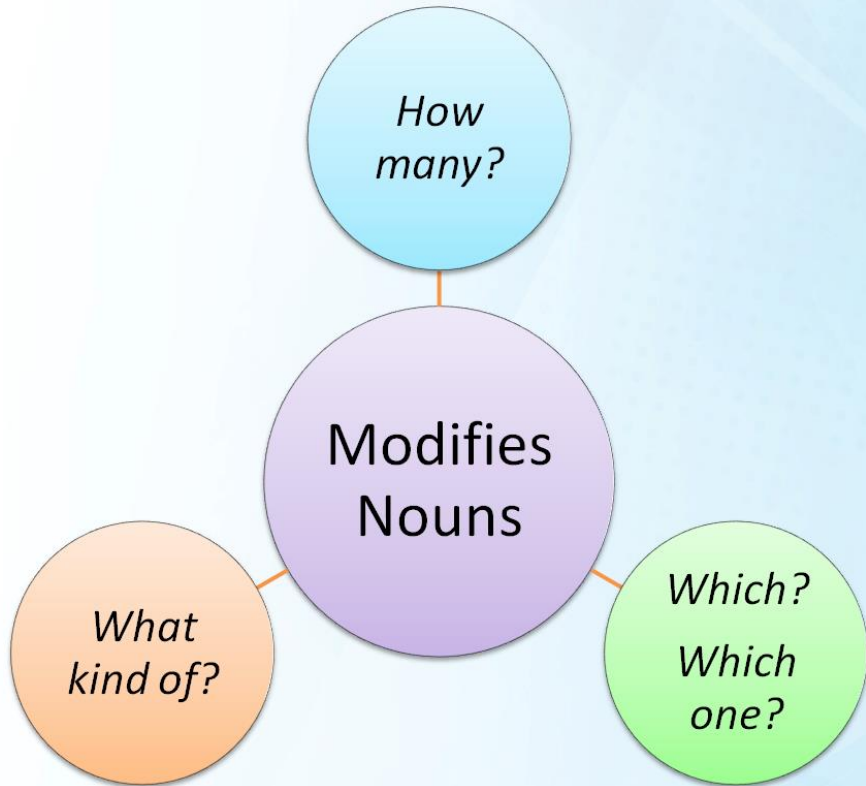
Correcting a Dangling Modifier

As a pediatric oncologist, I have the wonderful opportunity to work with these courageous children.

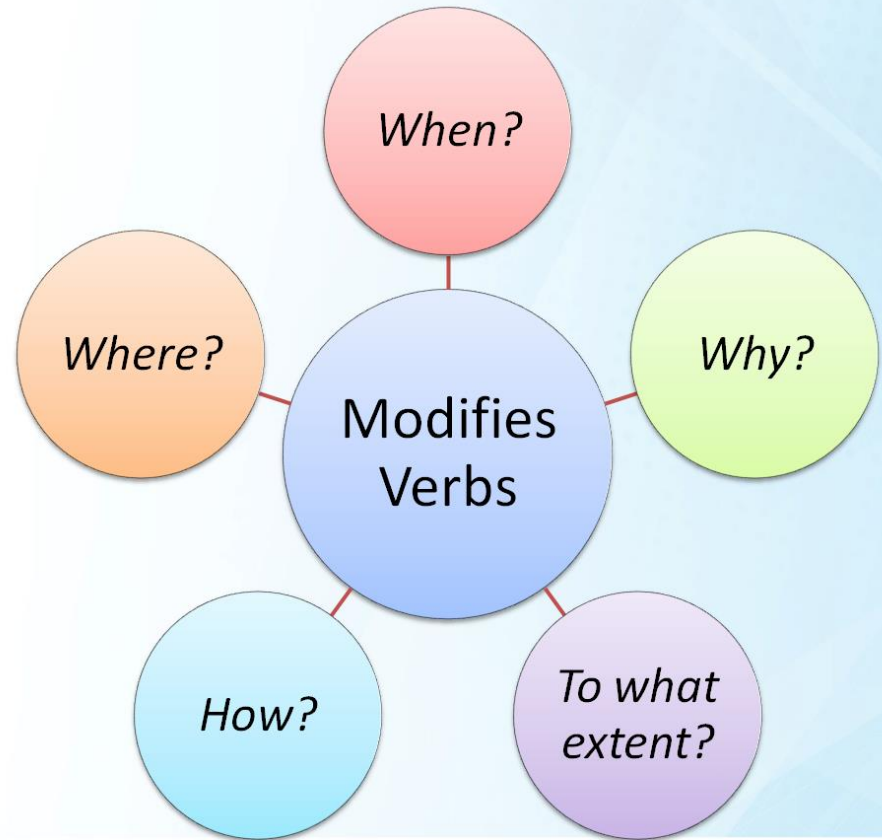
1. Add the missing noun (usually the real subject)
2. Re-structure the sentence
2. Use commas to omit nonrestrictive elements

“as a pediatric oncologist”

Adjectival modifiers



Adverbial modifiers



2. Common Errors in word choice



1. Methodology vs. method

Example: We examined the methodology of contemporary forensic science.

Example: We invented a new method of manufacturing ceramics.

2. If vs. whether

Example: The participants were asked whether (or not) they felt any discomfort after the treatment.

Example: If the results are inconclusive, the experiment should be repeated.

3. Hypothesis vs Theory

Example: His hypothesis was that giving his students less work would increase their test scores.

Example: Scientists hold the theory of evolution in high regard.

4. Discreet vs Discrete

Example: Discreet observation of the patient enabled the doctors to draw vital conclusions.

Example: The organisms can be classified into discrete categories.

5. Old vs Original

Example: Some old theories suggested that the earth was flat.

Example: The team replicated the original research to confirm its validity.

Avoid: As we had stated in the old manuscript, each patient was administered the same dosage during the study period.

Better: As we had stated in the original manuscript, each patient was administered the same dosage during the study period.

5. As a result vs Based on the results

Example: *‘The results of the experiment were inconclusive. As a result, the research had to be repeated..*

vs

Example: *‘Based on the results of the experiment, we concluded that bats are nocturnal creatures.’*

An Example with “based on”

- One of the commonly misused participles among Korean authors

An Example with “based on”

Based on the results of this study, we recommend increasing the dosage of investigational drug.

- Can you spot where the problematic modifier is?
- Is it a misplaced modifier or a dangling modifier?

An Example with “based on”

Based on the results of this study, **we recommend increasing the dosage** of investigational drug.

- There are two modifiers
 1. “Based on the results of this study”
 2. “of investigational drug”

What do they modify?

An Example with “based on”

Based on the results of this study, we recommend increasing the dosage of investigational drug.

- “Based on the results of this study” seems to modify “we”. How can we interpret this?

A dangling modifier

An Example with “based on”

SOLUTION: Add the missing noun!

Based on the results of this study, **our recommendation is increasing** the dosage of investigational drug.

An Example with “based on”

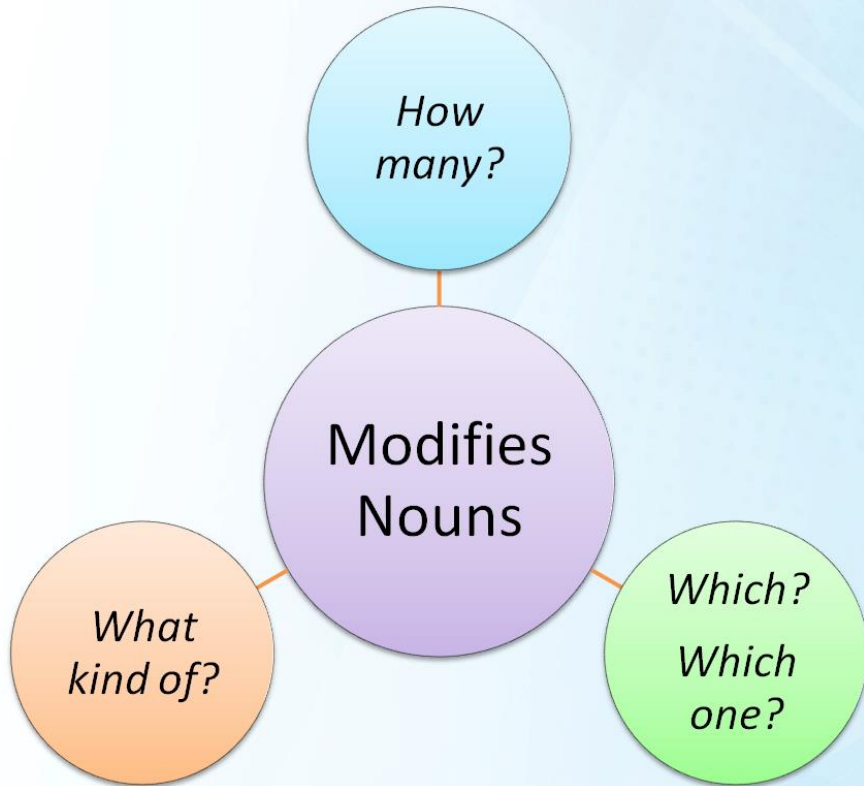
SOLUTION: Re-structure the sentence

Based on the results of this study, our recommendation is that **the dosage of investigational drug be increased.**

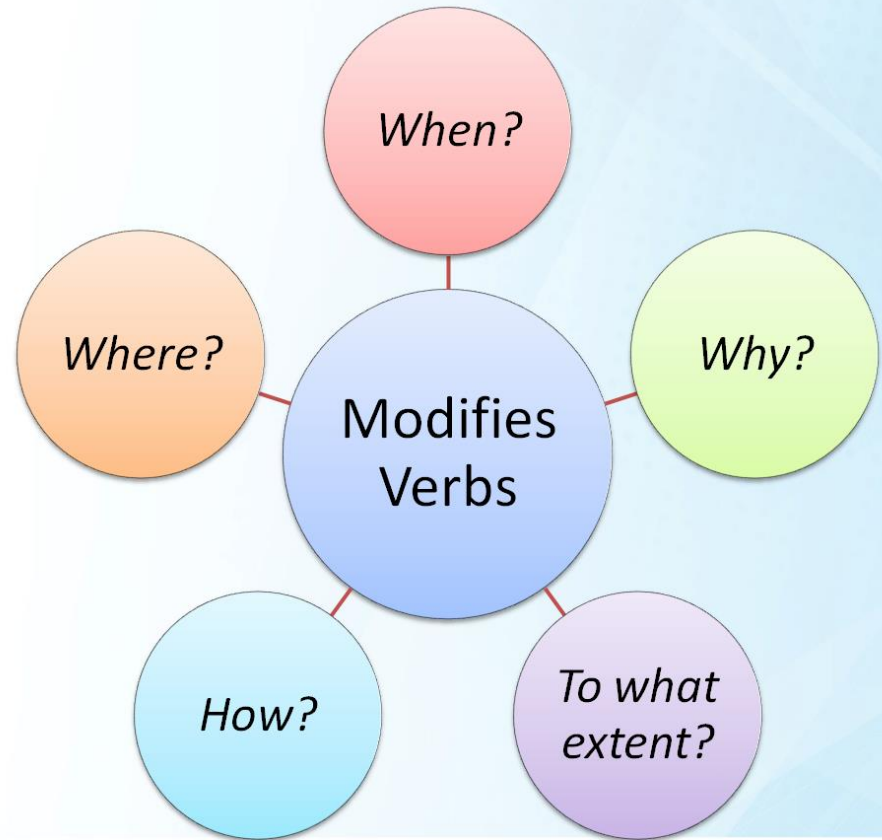
- Re-structure the sentence

“Based on the results of this study”

Adjectival modifiers



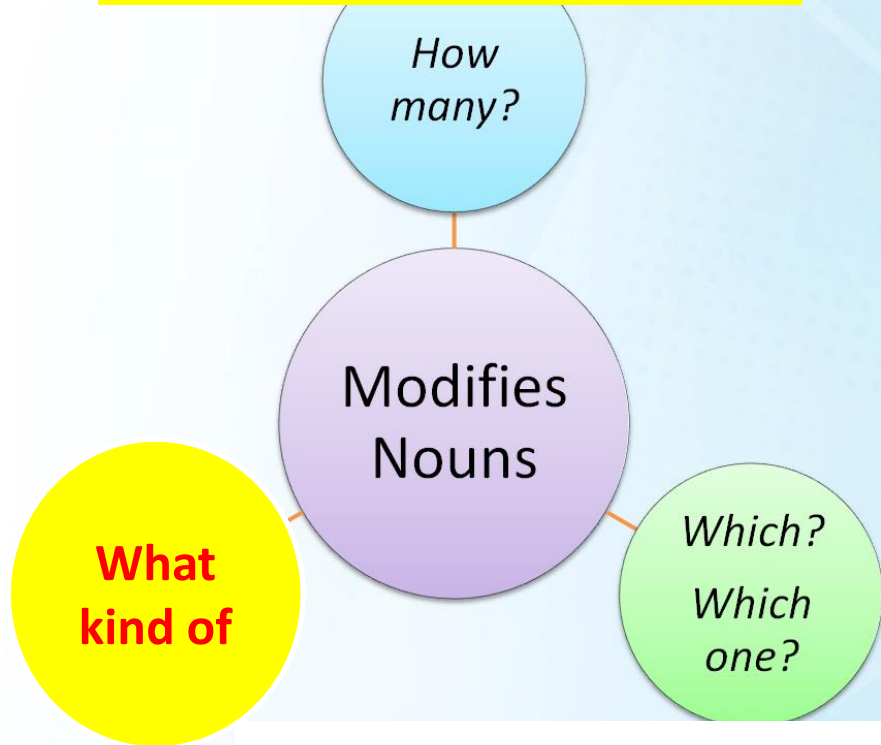
Adverbial modifiers



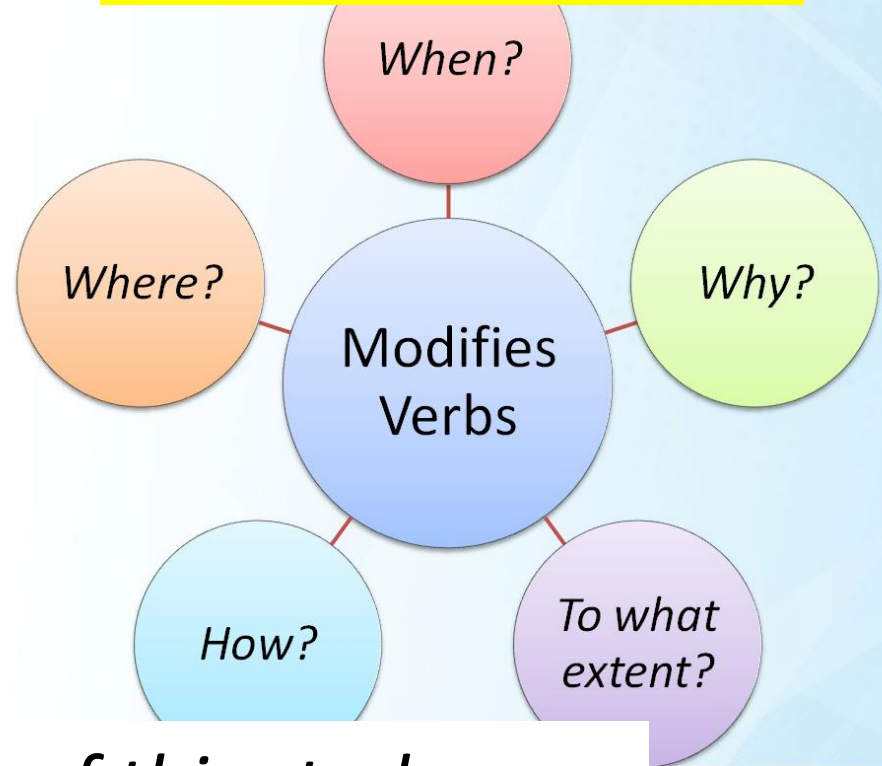
Wait a second...

“Based on the results of this study”

Adjectival modifiers



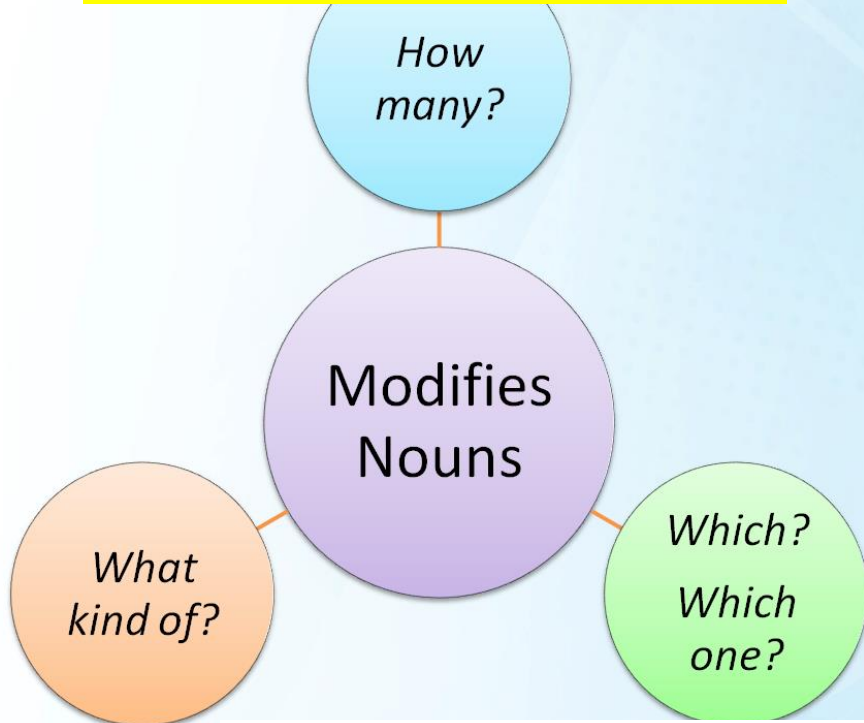
Adverbial modifiers



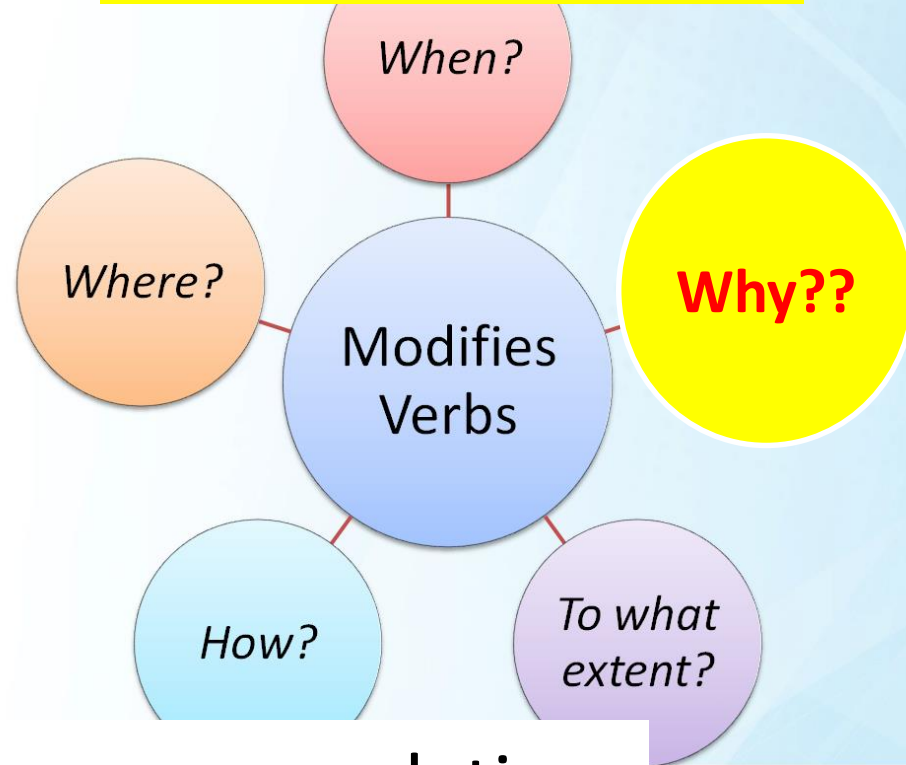
Based on the results of this study, our recommendation is that the dosage of investigational drug be increased.

“Based on the results of this study”

Adjectival modifiers



Adverbial modifiers



We are making this recommendation ***because*** the results of this study says it's a good idea.

3. Common Errors in comma usage



1. The interrupter rule/parenthetical comma

Example: *Nitrogen, an essential component of proteins, is important to plant nutrition.*

2. Serial comma

Example: *Mice that were fed the modified diet lived longer, weighed less, and had smaller litters than the mice in the control group.*

3. Introductory words/phrases

Example: *In this study, we compared the effectiveness of two plant extracts as antifungal agents.*

4. Dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence

Example 1: *If the establishment and growth of legumes are promoted by fire, legumes may be able to promote the recovery of the N pool.*

Example 2: *After incubation for two days at 40°C, samples were subjected to further analysis.*

4. Common Errors by Korean researchers



1. Starting sentences with a number

150 nm thick indium tin oxide was deposited as a transparent current spreading layer.

- ✓ **Note that a 150 nm** thick indium tin oxide was deposited as a transparent current spreading layer.
- ✓ **One hundred and fifty nanometer** thick indium tin oxide was deposited as a transparent current spreading layer.
- ✓ **In this study, 150 nm** thick indium tin oxide was deposited as a transparent current spreading layer.

2. Using letters instead of symbols

The equation for estimate this value is $A=3.65 \times 10^{-2} \gamma$ [a + b].

✓ The equation for estimate this value is $A=3.65 \times 10^{-2} \gamma$ [a + b].

3. No spaces between a number and its unit

The body weight of beagles ranged between 5kg and 10kg.

- ✓ The body weight of beagles ranged between **5 kg** and **10 kg**.

4. Using the past tense for table & figures

The baseline characteristics of all subjects were summarized in Table. 1.

- ✓ **The baseline characteristics of all subjects **are** summarized in Table. 1.**

5. Subject-verb agreement

The ratio of positive cells per 1000 cells were defined as the positivity index.

- ✓ **The ratio of positive cells per 1000 cells **was** defined as the positivity index.**

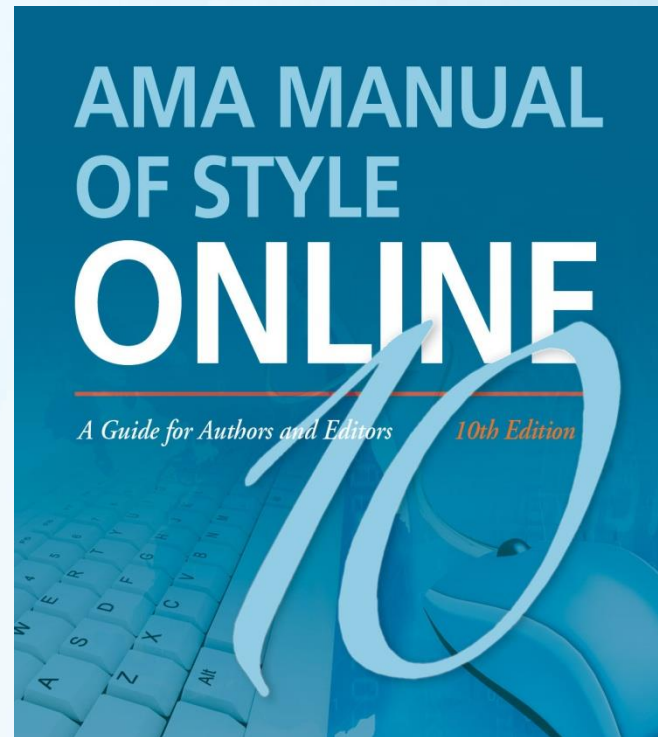
6. Repeating information

The baseline characteristic **are shown in Table 1. Table 2** shows the body temperatures of all female subjects.

- ✓ The **Table 1 and 2 shows** the baseline characteristics and body temperatures of all female subjects, **respectively.**

Writing Resources

- Essentials of Writing Biomedical Research Papers—Mimi Zeiger
- AMA Manual of Style: A Guide for Authors and Editors



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