Dangling Participles

By: Nancy Armstrong

Participles are verb forms that act as adjectives.

In the English language, we have 2 participles: present and past.

Present: “ing” form of the verb

Example:
- The mean dog…
- The menacing dog…
- The snarling dog…

Past: “ed/en” form of the verb

Example:
- The mean dog…
- The untamed dog…
- The chosen dog…

Participle Phrases are phrases that begin with a verb form and are used to modify nouns and pronouns.

Dangling Participle is the name given to a participial phrase that is misplaced and has the effect of modifying the wrong noun or pronoun.

The following are examples of dangling modifiers:

Incorrect: Flying over the mountain tops, the cattle could be seen.

This participial phrase is “dangling” because it makes it seem as though “the cattle” are doing the “flying.”

Correct: Flying over the mountain tops, we could see the cattle.

Incorrect: Low in the water and loaded with cargo, the sailors thought the tiny ship would sink.

This participial phrase is “dangling” because it makes it seem as though “the sailors” are doing the “low” and “loaded.”

Correct: Low in the water and loaded with cargo, the tiny ship looked as though it would sink.
Dangling Participle Exercises
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Directions: Rewrite each of the following sentences to correct the dangling participles.

1. Angered by the judge’s decision, a chair was thrown across the room by the defendant.
2. Turning the car in the wrong direction, the pedestrian was almost hit by Marcy.
3. Discouraged by the prognosis, the surgery was called off.
4. Making dinner in a hurry, the rice was almost burned by my husband.
5. Writing my paper the night before it was due, my computer crashed and I lost all of my work.
6. Refusing to wear suntan lotion at the beach, my nose was completely burned.
7. Driven by the desire to be the best, a gold medal was won by the Olympic team.
8. Working on the sculpture day and night, the rent for the artist’s studio was late.
9. Studying for the exam, a good grade was earned.
10. Saddened by the news, a candle was lit for the soldier.
11. Cleaning his apartment, many cob webs were found by Scott.
12. Engrossed in the book, the phone call from her mother-in-law was missed.
13. Tired of the politics at his office, a resignation was turned in by Terrence.
14. Impressed with her talent, a scholarship was offered to her.
15. Reviewing the taxes, an extra thousand dollars was owed to the IRS.