

Exercise walk-through

Grammar, mechanics, and clarity ■ 7.7

eXercise

You must be able to

- identify a misplaced modifier and what it attaches to
- fix a comma splice and a run-on
- resolve an unclear pronoun reference
- explain when punctuation changes meaning rather than only form

Method — Misplaced modifiers

A modifier attaches to the nearest available noun. “Running for the bus, the rain soaked her coat” makes the rain run. The fix is to put the intended subject next to the modifier.

Method — Splices and run-ons

Two independent clauses cannot be joined by a comma alone. Use a full stop, a semicolon, or a comma plus a coordinating conjunction. Which you choose signals how closely the ideas are related.

Method — Pronoun reference

“The council told the union it had failed.” Who failed? Where the pronoun could attach to two nouns, replace it with the noun.

Method — Punctuation and meaning

“The students, who had revised, passed” says all revised. “The students who had revised passed” says only some did. The commas carry the claim.

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

State what a modifier attaches to.

Solution 2.1

Method: Misplaced modifiers

Worked steps

the nearest available noun **B1**, which is why placement changes meaning **B1**.

Practice 2.2 ■ 3 marks

State three ways to fix a comma splice.

Solution 2.2

Worked steps

a full stop **B1**; a semicolon **B1**; a comma plus a coordinating conjunction **B1**.

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

“The students, who had revised, passed.”

- (a) State what this claims.
- (b) State what removing the commas would claim.

Solution 2.3

Method: Punctuation and meaning

Worked steps

(a) that all the students had revised, and all passed **B1**. (b) that only those who had revised passed **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 1 mark

“Walking to school, the traffic seemed heavier” is faulty because

- A** it is too short
- B** the modifier attaches to “the traffic”
- C** it is a comma splice
- D** the pronoun is unclear

Solution 3.1

- A it is too short
- B the modifier attaches to “the traffic”** 
- C it is a comma splice
- D the pronoun is unclear

Worked steps

- B.** the traffic cannot walk to school.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 1 mark

Replacing an ambiguous pronoun with the noun is preferable because it

- A** shortens the sentence
- B** removes the ambiguity
- C** adds emphasis
- D** creates parallelism

Solution 3.2

Method: Pronoun reference

- A shortens the sentence
- B removes the ambiguity 
- C adds emphasis
- D creates parallelism

Worked steps

- B. the noun cannot be attached to the wrong antecedent.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 4 marks

Correct and explain: “The report was late, the committee met anyway.”

Solution 3.3

Worked steps

identifies the comma splice **B1**; corrects it with a full stop, semicolon or conjunction **B2**; explains that two independent clauses cannot be joined by a comma alone **B1**.