# Modifiers

A modifier can be simply described as a word or group of words that describes another word or group of words. These are words that bring writing to life. Modifiers are either adjectives or adverbs.

## 1. An adjective modifies a noun or pronoun

An adjective modifies a noun or pronoun and can answer the questions, “What kind? How many? Which one or whose?” Adjectives are also number and color words.

Examples of adjective modifiers:

- The **three brown** dogs ran away from their **mean** master.
  - (modify dog) (modify master)
- My **favorite** meal is a **rare** steak and a **tossed** salad.
  - (modifies meal) (modifies steak) (modifies salad)

## 2. An adverb generally modifies a verb

An adverb generally modifies a verb, but it can also modify an adjective or another adverb. Adverbs can also modify gerunds, infinitives, and participles. In addition, adverb modifiers can be complete clauses, many times found at the beginning of a sentence. When you are trying to decide whether a modifier you have chosen is an adjective or adverb, look the word up in the dictionary. The part of speech is usually designated at the beginning of the entry (for example, adjective or adverb). Adverbs can answer when, where, how, how much, and how far. Examples of adverb modifiers:

- He finished his research paper **quickly**.
  - (modifies finished)
- **When you have finished your report**, please turn off the computer.
  - (adverbial phrase modifies “turn off”)
- The crocheted vest was **reasonably well** made.
  - (modifies adverb “well”) (modifies verb “made”)

### Phrases used as modifiers:

A phrase is a group of words that does not have a subject (noun or pronoun) or predicate (verb); therefore, it cannot stand alone as a sentence or be treated like a clause which has both a subject and a predicate. Phrases can be defined as modifiers because they add additional meaning to the sentence just as adjectives and adverbs do.

Examples of phrases:

1. **Prepositional:** Used as adjective modifiers (with, for, to, of, off, in, on, up, down, at, about, and so on plus the object of the preposition).
   - The girl **with the bag of groceries** is my roommate.
     - (modifies “girl”) (modifies “bag”)

2. **Participial:** Made up of a present or past participle verb form and its related words; acts as an adjective modifier because it modifies a noun.
   - The car, **speeding out of control**, ran into a ditch.
     - (present participle phrase modifying “car”)
   - The car, **drained of oil**, came to an immediate stop.
     - (past participle phrase modifying “car”)

3. **Gerund:** Consists of a participle verb form ending in –ing and its related words, used in the place of a noun in a sentence.
   - *Eating at home can be healthier than eating at restaurants.*
     - (a noun phrase) (also a noun phrase)

4. **Infinitive:** A verb form, usually preceded by “to,” that can be used as a noun, adjective, or adverb.
   - Everyone wants **to restrict** his or her fat intake nowadays.