

# The Dangling Modifier

Volume 7, Number 2

A national newsletter by and for peer tutors in writing, produced in association with the NCPTW

Spring Issue 2001

## Mission Statement

The mission of *The Dangling Modifier* is to provide a national forum for ongoing conversation among peer tutors in writing. *The Dangling Modifier* is designed to stimulate discussion, promote national peer tutor activities, and share helpful information among writing centers across the nation. The editorial staff strives to select pieces that are interesting, controversial, original, and well-written.

## Inside this Issue

|  |    |
|--|----|
| "Battling the Writing Blahs".....                | 2  |
| The Name Game.....                               | 2  |
| NCPTW Keynote Speaker.....                       | 3  |
| "Internships, Peer Tutoring,<br>and Beyond"..... | 4  |
| "Thirtysomething Peer Tutor".....                | 5  |
| "All I need to know about life..." ..            | 5  |
| Tutor Profile: Susan Spahn.....                  | 6  |
| "The Evolution of a Writing Process"....         | 6  |
| "Fabulous Frustration and<br>a Green Pen".....   | 7  |
| "The Writing Center is..." ..                    | 7  |
| "The Evolution of Thought".....                  | 8  |
| "From Sweaty Palms to<br>Successful Papers"..... | 9  |
| Dear Tutor Guru.....                             | 10 |
| The Dangling Doodlers' Page.....                 | 11 |

## The Dangling Modifier Staff

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Managing Editor<br/>and Layout Editor</b><br><i>Anne Richardson</i> | <b>Editors</b><br><i>Amanda Moore</i><br><i>Kate Pilhuj</i>        |
| <b>Assistant Managing<br/>Editor</b><br><i>Maggie Herb</i>             | <b>Staff Writers</b><br><i>Alex Doehrer</i><br><i>Amanda Moore</i> |
| <b>Public Relations</b><br><i>Alex Doehrer</i>                         | <b>Advisor</b><br><i>Julie Story</i>                               |

## Center Your Plans on the 2001 National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing

By Adria Froehlich, Writing Center Intern at Muhlenberg College

The 18th Annual National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing will be held at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, on November 2-4, 2001. The conference will explore the extent to which we as students, teachers, administrators, and writers want writing to be our "center." Muhlenberg College, Lafayette College, Lehigh University, and Moravian College are working together and planning a conference that invites peer tutors, writing center administrators, and faculty to participate in engaging, tutor-led presentations.

Students are taking an active role in the preparation process. Currently, Linda Miller, Director of the Writing Center at Muhlenberg College, offers internships to students who want experience with event planning. Some of the projects available to students for this semester include designing the conference brochure, designing an informational web page, distributing and designing proposal request fliers, contacting hotels, and communicating with faculty and administrators from an array of colleges and universities. The Conference Committee of Muhlenberg College's Writing Center is also involved in the planning. The committee is working on projects, such as designing and ordering the conference T-shirt, planning the food

menu for the weekend, and coordinating social events for the evenings. After April 16th, the proposal deadline, undergraduate and graduate students from the cooperating host schools will read the proposals and discuss the schedule of sessions for the weekend.

Proposals received thus far include a presentation on Muhlenberg's Writing Assistant and First-year Seminar programs, as well as Muhlenberg's Community Admissions Program. The latter session will center upon the relationships between writing tutors and inner-city "at risk" high school students in Allentown. Another potential session will discuss assignments written by college professors that promote reading, writing, and thinking critically.

The conference will showcase the essayist Scott Russell Sanders (see article on page 3), who provided us with the metaphor "writing from the center." Sanders will speak at Muhlenberg's Moyer Forum on Saturday afternoon. Saturday morning, we will begin the conference with a keynote panel presentation.

We are centering our energies on planning a memorable, thought-provoking conference, and we hope to see all who are interested in attending in the fall. ✧

Check out the DM online at [www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling\\_Modifier/index.htm](http://www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling_Modifier/index.htm)



# Battling the Writing Blahs

By Jodi L. Deur, Writing Consultant  
at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan

Halfway through my first semester as a writing consultant, I faced yet another student who pushed her paper to me and said, "Just fix the grammar, please." Glancing down at the typed page, I immediately recognized it: another personal narrative. Yeah, you know the type. Those papers where students get so excited to tell a story about themselves that they can't wait to start. Then the words get onto the page, and the paper ends up being the same old story, and the student knows it. Now, she just wanted to get the grammar corrected, turn it in, and forget about it.

Tired of battling with students who wanted me to transform their paper into the perfect essay just by correcting commas, I recklessly decided to take a new approach. "How about telling your story in a different way?" I suggested. "Maybe you could start in the middle of the climactic moment and then have the story flashback to what happened before."

"Cool!" she exclaimed, "that would make it almost like a movie." Pulling the paper closer to her, she intently examined it, murmuring, "I know... I'll start out with this part, make it really descriptive, and then I'll put *this* part in next, and then...."

Taking charge, she drew arrows around the paragraphs and scribbled in the margin. I was amazed, for my suggestion was definitely going to make the paper more difficult to write. She didn't seem to mind though. Throughout the rest of the session, she constantly looked to me for opinions and advice, but now more as a peer helping

her create her own masterpiece, rather than an editor.

This experience taught me the importance of helping writers make their paper uniquely their own. To stay away from mere proofreading and to enable students to become better writers, writing tutors need to help students write with a personalized flair.

As a tutor, you can encourage this in a few easy ways. Help the student liven up narrative stories with different storytelling styles—changing from third person to first person, straight narrative to stream of consciousness, or wordy prose to short journal entries. For other assignments, keep a book of quotations handy to have the student thumb through for something humorous or profound to include in the paper. Or, have a student develop a story, fictional or real, that could illustrate the thesis, giving a personal touch to something that otherwise might be dry and tedious. Finally, play with titles. Figuring out a catchy title might just be the boost a student needs to become proud of the paper and to really invest time in the work.

These suggestions may prove difficult at first, especially with less-experienced writers. Though creating an excellent final paper may take longer, students are often willing to keep working because they enjoy breaking from the norms and being different. The challenge itself will give them the will to win. ✧



## The Name Game

Different writing centers across the nation use different titles when referring to the tutors, the people they tutor, and the time spent tutoring. Here are some of the names we call ourselves and each other.

### We Are:

**Peer Tutors**  
**Writing Consultants**  
**Peer Helpers**  
**Writing Assistants**

### We Work With:

**Writers**  
**Students**  
**Clients**  
**Tutees**

### We Conduct:

**Tutorials**  
**Sessions**  
**Meetings**  
**Consultations**

The Name Game was originally published in the Volume I, Number I Fall 1994 issue of *The Dangling Modifier*.



# Noted Author and Distinguished Professor To Give Keynote Address at 2001 NCPTW

By Alex Doeherer

The keynote speaker at this year's NCPTW at Muhlenberg College will be Scott Russell Sanders, noted essayist and author, whose book *Writing from the Center* provides the theme for the conference.

Sanders gave a reading recently on the Penn State University Park campus to a nice turnout that was "responsive and generous." He gives about fifty lectures and readings a year. Sanders has published eighteen works of fiction and nonfiction and eight children's books. "I've been writing seriously for thirty years, and have been publishing books for about twenty," said Sanders. For his nonfiction, Sanders has won the Lannam Literary Award and the Great Lakes Book Award.

Sanders was born in Memphis, Tennessee but was raised in northeastern Ohio. He was valedictorian at Brown University and received several scholarships including the Marshall Scholarship. Writing his dissertation on D.H. Lawrence, he received his Ph.D. from Cambridge University. A professor at Indiana University since 1973, Sanders is now a Distinguished Professor of English and Director of the Wells Scholars Program. He currently teaches classes on twentieth-century literature, the nature-writing tradition, the literature of community, science and literature, and also workshops in the writing of fiction and nonfiction.

He sometimes refers students to the Writing Tutorial Services at Indiana University at Bloomington, where they have a very active and successful center.

Sanders has not been a tutor in his academic career, but he said, "I have worked with hundreds, probably even thousands, of students on their writing, from the earliest idea-gathering stages through the final revisions. As students gain a greater command over language, they also develop a greater clarity and confidence in their thinking, and that gives me pleasure. I also enjoy seeing the way students acquire a richer understanding of their lives through personal writing."

When asked about being published, Sanders gave this advice to aspiring authors: "To succeed in

writing takes patience, commitment, and long practice, as well as talent. There are no shortcuts."

At Brown University, he studied physics for three years before switching to English. "I came to realize that I derived greater joy from using language and from pursuing questions through literature than I did from using mathematics and pursuing questions through science," said Sanders. "I didn't lose my love for science; I merely recognized that my gifts and tastes were better suited to literature."

Though Sanders derives his career from English and prose, his life is more than just writing. He has been married for thirty-three years to a biochemist and has two children; one is a doctoral student in biology at Indiana University and the other is a business consultant in Chicago.

The keynote address is still several months away, but Sanders has indicated that he will use illustrations from his own work and draw on examples of advice he has given to students.

Sanders is a prolific author who will make a dynamic and enlightening keynote speaker for this year's NCPTW. ✨

## Ever get the feeling that you've missed something?

Well, you have!

*The Dangling Modifier* is selling back issues. Get all the nuggets of knowledge and tutor wisdom in previous issues. Send all inquiries to [danglingmodifier@psu.edu](mailto:danglingmodifier@psu.edu)

## Want to see your name in lights?

Okay, how about in print?

If you have an article on writing or tutoring you would like to see published, send us your submissions.

*See the back page of this issue for details.*



## Call For Nominations

### The 2001 NCPTW Ron Maxwell Award for Distinguished Leadership in the Collaborative Learning Practices of Peer Tutors in Writing

Know someone you would like to see  
recognized for achievements in your  
Writing Center?

The NCPTW Ron Maxwell Leadership Award is given annually to a professional in the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing who distinguishes themselves by demonstrating leadership, helping the NCPTW, building a record of bringing peer tutors to present at the Conference, initiating innovative programs at their writing center, and welcoming and meeting new challenges in a center guided by a collaborative learning philosophy. These are just examples, but the NCPTW does look to recognize unacknowledged work.

#### Selection Process:

An awards committee (Jon Olson, Ron Maxwell, and several other recent hosts or conference chairs) reviews nominations and chooses an annual recipient. A plaque and a \$200 cash prize are funded by an endowment from Ron and Mary Maxwell. The administrator of the award is currently Jon Olson, director of the Penn State Center for Excellence in Writing, a center that carries forward the work in collaborative learning Maxwell advocated during his career at Penn State University.

#### Nomination Process:

Send nominations by August 31, 2001, to Jon Olson via email [jeo3@psu.edu](mailto:jeo3@psu.edu), fax (814) 863-9627, or a letter addressed to Maxwell Award, Center for Excellence in Writing, Penn State University, 206 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5900. For more information, call (814) 865-9243 or consult <http://www.chss.iup.edu/wc/ncptw>. Please provide the nominee's name, title, affiliation, postal address, email address, and phone number. Support the nomination with as much evidence as time permits. The committee admires distinguished writing, but it also welcomes quick and sketchy nominations. ✧

## Internships, Peer Tutoring, and Beyond

By Alex Doeherer and Susie Waterstreet,  
Writing Tutors at The Pennsylvania State University

As tutors representing Penn State's writing center, we gave a presentation at the 2000 NCPTW hosted by Merrimack College, to a group of fellow tutors interested in internships. This discussion continued one which had begun the previous year at the 1999 NCPTW at Penn State. The purpose of both discussions was to make tutors aware of the skills they possess, and more so, how they could exemplify their skills on a résumé to find internships and other opportunities.

At the 2000 conference, we invited tutors to share previous internship experiences and network with other tutors for new opportunities. We also discussed how tutoring skills, along with other knowledge a tutor gains as part of a writing center, can enhance a tutor's future. In order to clarify the skills we possess, we made a large list of tutoring skills, such as proofreading, collaborating, learning different writing styles, paying close attention to details, and giving constructive criticism. We then converted this list into résumé "blurbs" to illustrate how versatile our tutoring skills really are and how useful they can be when looking for internships and other opportunities.

The workshop also included a thorough discussion of how each school's tutors networked through alumni, conferences, professors, and chambers of commerce to find opportunities in publishing, communications, administrations, or within their own writing centers. Interestingly, we discovered a reciprocal relationship between tutoring skills and skills gained from other areas and student life. We found that every tutor brings valuable outside skills to the writing center—like style savvy, an understanding of business offices, and an ability to handle high-stress or difficult situations, to name a few—which all enhance one's tutoring style. Truly, working at a writing center gives a tutor extremely invaluable experience, and the knowledge a tutor gains from tutoring is applicable in many other areas of student life. ✧



# Thirtysomething Peer Tutor

by Donna Binns,

Graduate Teaching Assistant and Writing Consultant at The University of Kansas

One of my biggest challenges as a Writer's Roost tutor was adapting to the peer portion of our job title. Though we do work with faculty members, staff, and graduate students, much of our clientele consists of undergraduate students. After teaching high school for several years prior to returning to The University of Kansas as a Ph.D.-seeking student and Graduate Teaching Assistant, I saw myself as more of a teacher than a college student. Consequently, I wasn't sure how well I would be able to assume the role of peer to our undergraduate clients.

Fortunately, the Writer's Roost training workshop and weekly practicum provided us with

techniques for allowing our clients to take the lead in our sessions while we act as facilitators rather than experts or teachers. I realized that the clients possessed knowledge of the rhetorical situations for their writing that I did not, so I could encourage them to discuss and consider that knowledge in our sessions. Still, I was also a product of years of teacher training that had encouraged me to be an authority figure to students rather than someone on equal footing. I gradually grew more comfortable. I began to present myself as an interested reader who not only asked questions but also allowed the student to see the paper through the eyes of the audience. For example, rather than telling a student that a sentence is vague, I might say, "As a reader, I see a couple of possible meanings for this sentence." Then I'll ask the students what they think, and let them decide if or how they'll revise.

Last semester, I received a positive indication that students could perceive me as a peer rather than an instructor. I worked with a client who had the same, distinctive, last name as one of my students; I asked her if she had a relative at K.U. When she told me that she had a sister and gave me her name, I casually mentioned that her sister was in my technical writing class. The following day, the client's sister said that my client had thought that I was another student in the class, not the instructor, and now they were both a little embarrassed because she'd acted like I was "just" a fellow student. I assured my student that her sister had actually understood the situation and acted quite appropriately because I am a peer tutor, not an instructor, when I work at the Writer's Roost. ✧

All I really need to know about life,  
I learned in the Writing Center

By Ellie Jensen of Coe College in Grand Rapids, Iowa

Don't be afraid to cut and paste ~ Strangers are usually more scared of us than we are of them ~ Be open: sometimes a little variety is all it takes ~ Underneath all the debris, there is an idea somewhere; it just might take a little while to find it ~ Be patient ~ It doesn't have to be perfect the first time; in fact, it won't be ~ Don't be afraid to revise ~ No one else can tell you how to do it right ~ Let go of the "supposed to's" ~ Sometimes, it's the process, not the outcome that is important ~ You might surprise yourself when you get to the end ~ Avoid clichés like the plague ~ Trust can be a savior, but it can also be abused ~ Dig in and hold on, but know when to let go ~ Let your participles dangle ~ Each paper, each situation is unique, and each calls for a different response ~ Even if you fall, you have to get back up ~ During his baseball career, Babe Ruth struck out 1,330 times ~ Don't wait for inspiration ~ Four weeks late is never too late ~ Question everything ~ Double check spell check ~ Experiment ~ No matter how far ahead you work, you'll always be behind. Get used to it ~ Nobody likes lemon or grape Jolly Ranchers™ ~ The boss only comes around when you're not doing anything ~ You have to be able to accept criticism from some people, and you have to be able to ignore it ~ Believe in yourself.



*Present Tutor, Future Teacher:  
Profiling a Successful Tutor at  
Pittsburg State University, Kansas*

*By Tutors Stacy Handshumaker and Tracy Homan*



Susan is currently a senior in the English Education program and plans to student teach in the fall of 2001. She is working in her fourth semester as a Writing Center tutor. During these semesters, Susan has developed from a tutor into a colleague. According to The Writing Center

director Professor John T. Ikeda Franklin, she "has become less an employee/Writing Center tutor and more Susan Spahn, English teacher." Susan sees being a tutor as preparation for becoming a middle and secondary school English teacher. Susan states, "Reading over papers here teaches me what to look for and what are common errors in student writing."

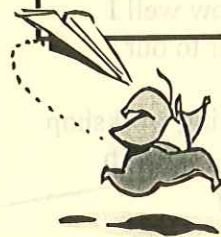
Due to her training and experience as a tutor, Susan has refined her strengths when working with writers. For example, she has become an excellent active listener, which gives her the capability to help writers solve their problems. For instance, a foreign exchange student came in and Susan worked with him to revise his paper and explained why the corrections were made. To Susan, the most important part of this experience was when this student returned. He told her his instructor gave him the compliment, "well-written paper," and the student thanked her. This experience made Susan realize why she is a tutor. She helped change his understanding of English and improved his writing.

Outside of helping writers, Susan is beneficial to others who work in The Writing Center as she contributes to the training of new tutors. Professor Franklin believes that "this makes her an excellent role model" for the current and future Writing Center staff. Even though this might be her last semester, she has

had a positive influence on the students and tutors at The Writing Center.

Susan, along with other tutors, has created a comfortable, student-centered environment for writers. We know some writers are reluctant to receive help; however, this is the place where everyone is seen as equal. Our tutors have faced the same difficulties as all writers, but we have been trained to anticipate problems and help writers solve them. As a result of her experiences, Susan Spahn sets a standard for our team and helps us recognize and achieve this standard. ✨

*The Evolution of a Writing Process*  
*By Kurt Blythe, University of Kansas*

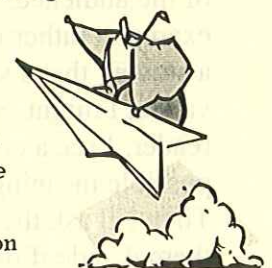
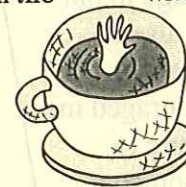


Prior to studying the lessons taught in the University of Kansas' preparatory tutoring class, my writing process had devolved into a frantic, caffeine- and nicotine-fueled example of why the

concept of a process was ever applied to writing. Papers were written non-stop, from beginning to end, with no thought given to revision: what passed for revision came within the writing "process." Needless to say, nervous breakdowns were frequent and the coherence of my writing suffered mightily. However, that was then and this is now (as the saying goes).

My involvement in the writing center has provided me with the opportunity to observe the evolution of ideas in other people, observation has caused my own method of writing. I am convinced, due to my immersion in the writing community, that I have rarely allowed myself to delve as deeply into texts as is possible. What I lacked from my former writing process—brainstorming, mapping, multiple drafts, and, most importantly, interaction with minds fresh to the material—is now integral parts of my relatively peaceful and coherent method.

Were it not for my now-intimate knowledge of writer's successes realized in the course of peer tutoring, I would remain a private madman. However, fully cognizant of the benefits of the peer tutoring method of writing papers, I exist as an interactive writer capable of occasional coherent thought, anticipating the aided evolution of my ideas. ✨







# Fabulous Frustration and a Green Pen

By Kristen Garrison,

Graduate Assistant to the Director of the University of Kansas Writing Center

For some reason, it seems that only frustrating sessions inspire me to spin a tale; I have plenty of fabulous sessions,

where the student writer and I really seem to work well together, where the student seems to leave with a renewed sense of confidence and purpose, and I bask in the glow of the Successful Session. But those stories are so boring. Like the evening news, I must luxuriate in the tragic, in the unsettling, in the accidents that unfold when a student and I collide head-on in our efforts to move in counter directions.

I have worked many times with a young woman who visits our writing center frequently. She, herself, is a walking text. With her idiosyncratic green pen, this writer makes her body part of the revision process; just as I might use a greasy napkin or credit card receipt to jot down an idea, she has memos to herself written all over her hands—thin, cryptic, spidery green scratchings. The drafts of her papers are equally veined with revision notes. Revision for her almost seems compulsive; she won't keep her hands or her drafts clean once she has that green pen uncapped. Accustomed to working with students who frequently struggle to alter more than one word of their printed text, I am both amazed and frightened by this woman and wonder why in the world she needs me.

Ten minutes into our first session together made the answer to that question painfully obvious: she won't stop. She won't end the process, stop the words, complete the product. I began our session typically and asked her what she wanted to work on. Immediately, she began talking through every single concern she had about the development of the content, the direction of her argument, the weight of her textual support, the level of her analysis, the organization of her paragraphs, the use of her vocabulary, the rhythm of her sentences, the use of the semi-colon, and the title of her essay. She posed questions to me then answered them herself. She would ignore me for five minutes while she mumbled under her breath, writing as she talked, completely absorbed in the world of her text, her thoughts, her micromanaging, and indefatigable muse. I found myself getting a bit petulant because she would not use the input I

provided when she asked for it. I found myself reduced to an eight-ball version of the writing consultant, answering only "yes," "no," or "decidedly so." And finally, "stop." The only consulting I really provided was to suggest that she stop revising.

And I call myself a writing consultant.

The woman with the green pen makes me think more deeply about my role as a consultant. She makes me think about my ego, about my agenda for her session, about my need to determine our session as "fabulous." Working with her has been the most frustrating, most fabulous, of sessions. She reminds me of my motivation for working with student writers: to encourage awareness of the possibility inherent in an unfinished product. ✧

## The Writing Center is ...

- ... the carburetor of my prose,
- ... the fuel pump of my thinking,
- ... the spark plugs of my inspiration,
- ... the wheels of my grammar,
- ... the odometer of my paragraphs,
- ... the shocks of my theories,
- ... the exhaust pipe of my stupid thoughts,
- ... the headlights of my outlines,
- ... the parking lights of my writer's blocks,
- ... the windshield wipers of my mind,
- ... the hood of my introductions,
- ... the body of my bodies,
- ... the trunk of my conclusions,
- ... the leather upholstery of my inner thoughts,
- ... the dimmer light of my understanding,
- ... the gear shift of my metaphors,
- ... the clutch of my run-ons,
- ... the intake manifold of my inspiration,
- ... and the brakes on my incessant rambling.

This verse was written by a team of Coe's staff members for the Best Analogy About Writing Competition during the 12th Annual Peer Tutors in Writing Conference at the Embassy Suites in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on October 26, 1996.



# The Evolution of Thought

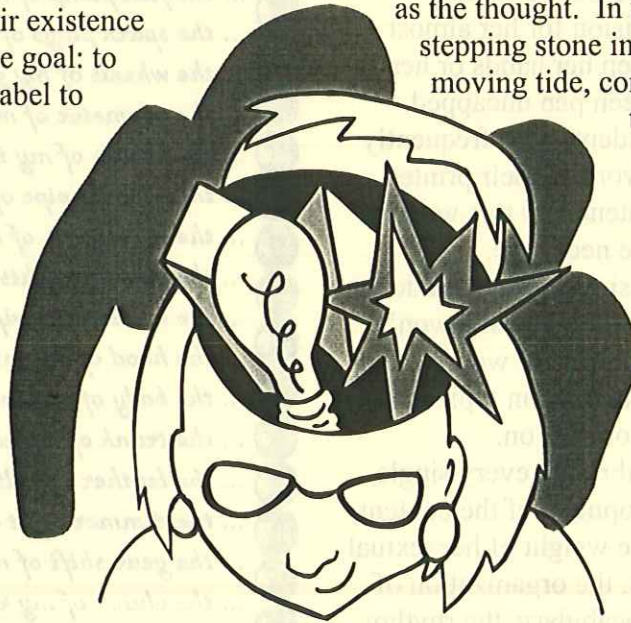
By Sarah Caufield, Writing Center Consultant  
at Coe College, Grand Rapids, Iowa

We don't necessarily think in prose. Our thoughts occur as fleeting and abstract ideas, bright flashes of emotion, and carefully memorized images, rather than carefully constructed sentences, with subjects and verbs intact. They are the creation of our physical brain, yet the thought itself has no physical properties. There is no absolute proof of its existence until it is communicated with someone else. The communication is accomplished through interpreting these abstract and unique ideas into a medium that is constant between individuals: the written or spoken word.

Putting thoughts into words enables the hazy mist of our thoughts to condense and take the shape of something solid, something concrete. Our ideas are forced, coerced, enticed, or finessed into a set of rules, to follow and record their existence through a physical means. The goal: to attach a tangible, understood label to something abstract. This concrete expression through words can be something powerful, enlightening, and beautiful if the perfect words are found and the thought is expressed appropriately in the words. But more often than not, the process of "translating" thoughts is a source of great frustration to find the words which represent the ethereal. This frustration then manifests itself into insecurity and writing turns into torture. The essence of the writing process is an obstacle in itself.

This is the insecurity that writers possess as they come seeking assistance to the Writing Center. Our role is the catalyst in the transformation of thoughts into words, a battalion armed only with the weapon of conversation, an instrument of natural selection in the evolution of thought. When two individuals sit down and talk about ideas, the translation process occurs, words begin to form, but there is no pressure in the expectation to come out with a perfect finished product. To be able to drag out the words in a relaxed setting is an assurance that the thoughts can actually exist in the form of language. But the advantage of verbalizing ideas is that the discovery of the words isn't transcribed into anything permanent. Nothing substantial remains to feel insecure about because the words are as fleeting as the thought. In this way, conversation is a stepping stone in the middle of the deftly moving tide, connecting the vast banks of

thinking and writing. Once you have talked about the ideas, the only natural succession is to get them down on paper. In this sense, the thought evolves from the dark abstract recesses of the mind, through the spoken word, eventually becoming a substantial word on paper. And within that beautiful and perfect word, the effort, meaning, and images of the idea are contained, just waiting for a reader to liberate and absorb them, thus reclaiming the idea to its original, yet indefinably changed, abstract form. ✧



**"The process of translating thoughts is a source of great frustration to find the words which represent the ethereal."**



# From Sweaty Palms to Successful Papers

By Lenora Adams, Writing Center Consultant at Coe College, Grand Rapids, Iowa



I recall the awkwardness I felt the first time I used the Writing Center for help on a paper. I can still remember the wrenching of my stomach and the dizzy lightheadedness I felt as I worried about some complete stranger delving into the chronicles of my mind and casting judgment on the quality of the thoughts therein. I clutched my paper tightly in my hand, dreading the moment I must relinquish it to the academically superior Writing Consultant. I shrank inside myself as I anticipated that my intellectual inferiority would soon be exposed.

Stepping tentatively over the threshold of the Writing Center's doorway, my eyes met those of my persecutor... and she smiled kindly. "Hi there! What can I do for ya?" Her words seemed muddled as they pushed through the hot ringing in my ears.

"I, um, I..."

"Want a conference?" she guessed.

"Uh, yeah, I guess so."

"OK—no problem!" she grinned cheerfully.

She offered me a cup of coffee and some Jolly Ranchers, and asked me how I liked my classes and teachers so far. It was not long before my dizziness had dispelled, and I was smiling in return. The anxiety that accompanied my first writing conference is far from unique. Having conferences on my own writing has been a crucial experience in reminding me to frequently review and evaluate the methods we use in our Writing Center conferences. Here are some strategies and tactics that writing consultants have used to help me feel more comfortable and ones that I in turn have used with other student writers when I have been the consultant:

## During the first thirty seconds:

- Give them instant attention when they step through the door.
- Smile and introduce yourself.
- Have a casual and upbeat demeanor.
- Offer coffee and candy, and ask about their classes.
- Show that you're interested in helping.

## Throughout the conference:

- Be energetic and friendly!
- Thank them for coming. Invite them to come again.
- Make your demeanor complement their demeanor.
- Use humor to keep the mood light.
- Ask them what they expect and want out of the conference.
- Ask them about their assignment and their teacher's expectations.
- Listen.
- Think carefully before you speak.
- Show genuine interest.
- Point out your common ground. For example, "Yes, I've had that same problem."
- Encourage them to take control of their conference and go at their own pace.
- Don't be overly critical.
- Conduct the conference as a student to a student, not an expert to a subordinate.
- Introduce them to other resources and Writing Center staff.
- Model good revision tactics.
- As a concluding reflection, ask them how they feel about their paper and your conference.
- If you see them later on campus, ask them how they're doing and how they did on their assignment. ✧

*The Dangling Modifier Staff  
would like to extend a special thanks to  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Learning Centers for their support  
during the past year.*



# Tutor Guru Says...

Dear Tutor Guru,

I feel like a grammatically-deficient writing tutor! Unlike many of the other tutors at the writing center, I am not an English major. Oftentimes, I feel inadequately trained to handle some of my clients' questions about grammar and punctuation. Sometimes I even wonder if I am helping them at all! I feel silly asking the other tutors in front of my client because I think it makes me look like a bad tutor. What can I do?

—Hopelessly Unhelpful

Dear Tutor Guru,

Sometimes when I tutor, students come in with bad breath. Since we sit close together and talk a lot, it can get distracting. How do I fix this problem without offending students or making them feel bad?

—Horror at Halitosis



Dear Horror at Halitosis,

Ah yes, the guru has encountered this problem many a time and has found subtlety to be key. The best solution is to have candy or mints on your person or in your writing center to be able to offer them to the student. This idea works twofold. It helps with the bad breath without mentioning the problem and helps with the friendly atmosphere that centers aspire to reach. If there is no candy or the student refuses, you must let your mind focus on the work at hand and not the breath. Remember that the session is only one moment in time that will soon pass, and with it, the student's bad breath.

Dear Hopelessly Unhelpful,

Stress not, fellow tutor. The wise person recognizes both achievements and limits. Wise tutors also recognize that they are not alone. No tutor is a grammar master; we are all students always learning. With this precept in mind, seek to enrich yourself on grammar matters you feel need attention. Find a grammar handbook, read it, and allow the book to be your guide and counsel in times of punctuation insecurity. Do not feel embarrassed to ask for help or reach for your guide; as the Guru said earlier, we must recognize our limits and remember we are all students. Your tutee will also be comforted by the realization that you are alike. And finally, worry not about your major; you will still be able to see things in papers others will not. The guru believes that two heads are better than one.

**Got a question for the Tutor Guru?**

Send your questions or tutoring suggestions to:

[danglingmodifier@psu.edu](mailto:danglingmodifier@psu.edu)

The Dangling Modifier  
Penn State University  
206 Boucke Building  
University Park, PA 16802

Or visit:

[www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling\\_Modifier/index.htm](http://www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling_Modifier/index.htm)

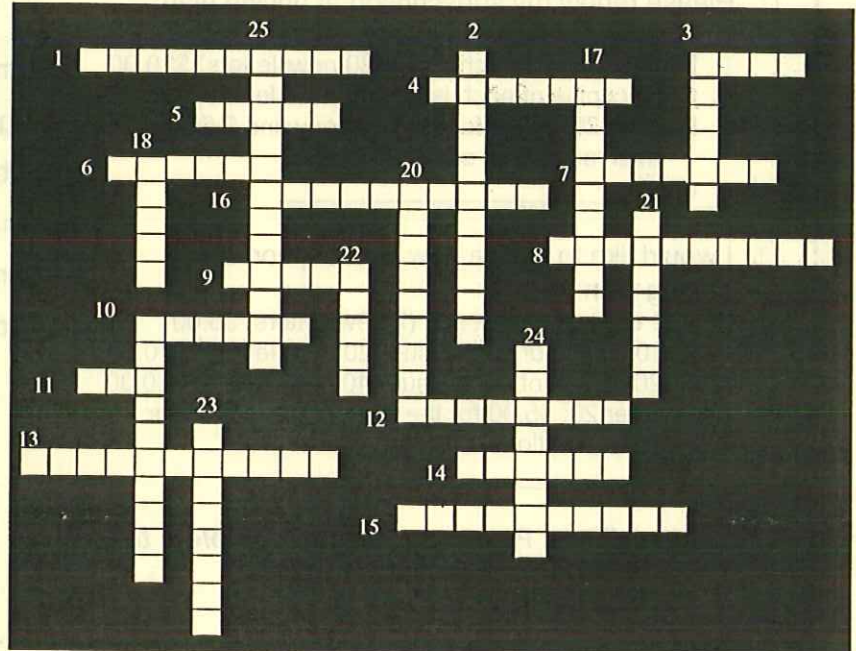


# The Dangling Doodlers' Page

## Crossword

### Across

1. Figurative language term where a part of the whole represents the whole.
3. \_\_\_\_ of voice shows the speaker's emotion.
4. One of the most requested areas for help in writing
5. The logical appeal
6. A \_\_\_\_ is reserved for teachers' markings. (2 words)
7. Not every writing tutor is an \_\_\_\_ major.
8. Errors in punctuation and spelling are of this type
9. Tutors have to be careful not to infringe on the writer's \_\_\_\_.
10. The pathetic appeal
11. Documentation style used most frequently in humanities writing
12. Three periods used for omission
13. Error: when only a comma is used to separate two independent clauses. (2 words)
14. Balance all criticism with \_\_\_\_.
15. Always have this reference on-hand
16. \_\_\_\_ mood is used for direct commands.



21. The large orange style manual
22. The ethical appeal.
23. Tori or Aaron, or a Bee
24. Often times, italics can be used to show \_\_\_\_.
25. Outlines help writers with \_\_\_\_.

Answers: [www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling\\_Modifier/index.htm](http://www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling_Modifier/index.htm)



### Down

2. Tie paragraphs and ideas together
3. \_\_\_\_ statement, or main point
10. To pass off others' writing as your own
17. "He think she's nice," shows a problem in \_\_\_\_.
18. Blunder
20. Modifies a noun



## Riddle

*What are the only two words in the English language that start and end with "und"?*

Stumped!  
Cryptogram  
Answer:  
Poetry is living  
proof that rhyme  
doesn't pay.  
Riddle Answer:  
underground &  
underfund

## Cryptogram

*poor poor poets!*

SDRFTA NJ QNHNEI  
STDDV FBWF TBAMR  
KDRJE'F SWA.

S = p and A = y



*The Dangling Modifier* is happy to renew your subscriptions, and we're always looking for submissions! If you would like to renew your subscription or see your work published nationally, fill out the form below or print it out online at [www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling\\_Modifier/index.htm](http://www.ulc.psu.edu/Dangling_Modifier/index.htm), and send it to *The Dangling Modifier*, The Center for Excellence in Writing, Penn State University, 206 Boucke Building, University Park, PA 16802, or contact us via email at [danglingmodifier@psu.edu](mailto:danglingmodifier@psu.edu). For subscriptions, make all checks or money orders payable to **Penn State Writing Center**.

## Dangling Modifier Subscription/Manuscript Submission Form

Please check one of the following options and fill in the appropriate information.

- ☐ Please renew my subscription at pricing plan:
- ☐ A 1 copy of each issue (2 newsletters) \$5.00
  - ☐ B 10 copies of each issue (20 newsletters) \$20.00
  - ☐ C 20 copies of each issue (40 newsletters) \$30.00
  - ☐ D Over 20: \$5.00 for the first copy and \$.65 for each additional copy
  - ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I would like to start a new subscription at pricing plan:
- ☐ A 1 copy of each issue (2 newsletters) \$5.00
  - ☐ B 10 copies of each issue (20 newsletters) \$20.00
  - ☐ C 20 copies of each issue (40 newsletters) \$30.00
  - ☐ D Over 20: \$5.00 for the first copy and \$.65 for each additional copy
  - ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

**All subscribers: Please be sure to complete the mailing address information.**

- ☐ Please consider my manuscript for publication:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Subject of Manuscript \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

*We request that all manuscripts are sent either by mail (hard copy and disk) or by email (attachment and within the body of the email).*

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
STATE COLLEGE,  
PA 16801  
PERMIT #1

The Dangling Modifier  
The Center for Excellence in Writing  
Penn State University  
206 Boucke Building  
University Park, PA 16802