

Revising for Dangling Participle: Challenge

Identify which two of the following seven sentences in bold are correct.

(Hint: sentences 4 and 5 are identical, but only one is correct. Do you see why?)

1. **Walking to the beach, the clouds were menacing.**
2. **Having raised tuition two years in a row, students are racking up huge debt loads.**
3. **By raising tuition, students are forced into debt.**
4. Tuition increases are a problem. **By raising tuition, it restricts access to education.**
5. The university must make tough decisions. **By raising tuition, it restricts access to education.**
6. **By raising tuition restricts access to education.**
7. **By raising tuition, the university restricts access to education.**

If you identified the fifth and seventh sentences as correct, bravo. The other five sentences in bold are problematic because they do not clearly indicate who is doing the action in the underlined phrase. In other (more technical) words, the participle (the *-ed* or *-ing* form of the verb) is dangling because it is not anchored with an agent (or “doer” of the action).

Getting rid of dangling participles will make your writing more clear, precise, and grammatical. You will also be more likely to use the active voice – an added bonus. (In case you are wondering, in active voice, the agent – or “doer” of the action – comes before the verb.)

Three Revision Strategies

1. **Aim for this pattern:** By _____-ing . . . , _____
Action *↑ Doer of the action right here*
2. **Replace the dangling participle with a subject and verb:**
 Example: **When the university raises tuition**, students often must rely on student loans.
When the university raises tuition, it forces students into debt.
3. **Make the participle into the subject of the sentence (e.g., by getting rid of “by”):**
 Example: Raising tuition restricts access to education.

Exercise

Revise the four problem sentences below taken from a student's analysis of a speech. A logical agent (or "doer" of the action) would be the speaker or the writer. (Sometimes the best revision involves cutting rather than rewording.)

The thesis appears in the last sentence of the introduction. By placing it here, it presents a strong statement to the audience that sums up the entire speech. . . .

By talking briefly about the com-pany's history in the introduction, it gives the audience the background they need to listen effectively to the points the speaker is making.

Through speaking of the coin toss that occurred to decide the company's name, this gets the audience's attention. . . .

[In the body], the points are organized from strongest to weakest. By doing so, this places importance on the beginning points.