



This series was written by Writing Tip Wednesday reader **Rick Hull**. Rick has been a health communications specialist with the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's (NCCDPHP's) Office of the Director for 36 years, many of them as a writer-editor. He is NCCDPHP's clearance coordinator and branding ambassador, CDC's logo-licensing and co-branding coordinator, and a reviewer in CDC's system logos clearance.

His favorite quotation is "Great ideas are hogwash. Style and structure are the essence of great writing." —Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Literature*

## Deadly Sin #6: End-of-Sentence Tack-ons

One of the easiest errors to stumble into is the misplaced modifier. I would like to focus briefly on a type of misplaced modifier that is common in scientific writing: the tacking on, at the end of a sentence or clause, of phrases introduced by "compared with," "resulting in," or "based on."

### **Example:**

However, there is greater use of injectables among married women compared with single women.

### **Problem:**

The rule of proximity (modifiers will try to attach to the nearest word they can modify) makes the tacked-on "compared with" appear to modify married women, rather than the whole clause "there is greater use."

### **Revision:**

However, married women are more likely than single women to use injectables.

### **Example:**

Varied prevalences are observed in other groups, resulting in lower R-squared values.

**Problem:**

“Resulting in” appears to modify “other groups,” rather than the entire thought of the main clause.

**Revision:**

The varied prevalences in other groups result in lower R-squared values.

**Example:**

Editors as Intelligent Citizens (EIS) reported a tenfold increase in jargon, based on multiple aggression tests of five former CDC authors.

**Problem:**

“Based on” appears to modify the nearest noun: jargon. “Jargon” thus appears to be “based on multiple aggression tests.”

**Revision:**

After analyzing multiple aggression tests of five former CDC authors, Editors as Intelligent Citizens (EIS) reported a tenfold increase in jargon.