

## **Editorial Graphics and Publishing Services**

### **Where to put “only”**

Merrill Perlman (Columbia Journalism Review) recently offered editors tips on usage and language.

Only may be a little word, but where you put it means a lot, Perlman said.

Put only closest to the word or phrase it’s modifying.

As Perlman pointed out, “Only I hit him in the eye” has an entirely different meaning than “I hit him only in the eye” or “I hit only him in the eye.”

When only moves around, it can change the meaning of the sentence by modifying other parts of the sentence.

Editors should always ask, “What is only modifying?”