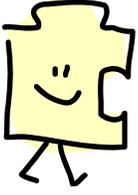


Picking Up the Pieces: Finding and Fixing SENTENCE FRAGMENTS



What is a sentence fragment?

Simply put, it is *an incomplete piece of a sentence*. It needs something to make it complete. We write a sentence, put the period in place, and then have an additional thought on the matter. That is how a sentence fragment is created.

Example: We spent all of June at Cape May. Which is the best beach in NJ.

To find a fragment, look for these clues:

Is the sentence missing a SUBJECT?

Does the sentence begin with...

A verb ending in “ing” (participial phrase)?

He dropped his keys. *Running* for the door.

The word “to” + verb (infinitive phrase)?

Mark went downtown on Tuesday. *To find* an apartment.

Also, ask yourself WHO or WHAT is doing the action.

Jim dropped his keys. Running for the door. (WHO was running for the door?)

Is the sentence missing a VERB?

Look for a noun or group of nouns related to another sentence (appositive phrase):

Nancy only likes two kinds of dessert. Cake and ice cream.

Also, ask yourself WHAT is the subject doing?

Last week, the head of the department of agriculture. (Did *what*?)

Also look for these SPECIAL WORDS, which may often indicate a fragment:

THAT, WHAT, WHICH, WHO, WHOM, WHOSE (relative pronouns)

The computer finally printed the paper. *Which* was a good thing.

IN, ON, INTO, FROM, FOR, OF, WITH, BEFORE, AT, BY, UNDER (prepositions)

The squirrel sat. *On* the brown, rotting stump.

AFTER, AS, BECAUSE, BEFORE, HOW, IF, WHEN (subordinating conjunctions)

Eva went to the symphony. *Because* she enjoys music.

AND, BUT, OR (coordinating conjunctions)

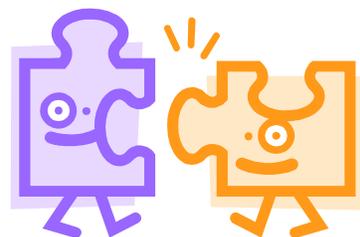
I like math. *But* I don't like reading.

How to Fix Your Fragments

Add the missing piece:

SUBJECT: *Mary* asked her father for a pizza.

VERB: Last week, the head of the department of agriculture *made an announcement*.



Combine two similar pieces—but make sure they fit together correctly!

Fragment: Nancy only likes two kinds of dessert. Cake and ice cream.
Combined Sentence: Nancy only likes two kinds of dessert—cake and ice cream.

Fragment: The squirrel sat. On the brown, rotting stump.
Combined Sentence: The squirrel sat on the brown, rotting stump.

Fragment: The computer finally printed the paper. Which was a good thing.
Combined Sentence: The computer finally printed the paper, which was a good thing.

Eliminate a special word—but make sure the sentence is then complete!

Fragment: Eva went to the symphony. Because she enjoys music.
Corrected: Eva went to the symphony. She enjoys music.

There may be several ways to fix a single fragment. You can try them all!

Fragment: Eva went to the symphony. Because she enjoys music.

Option #1: Eva went to the symphony. She enjoys music.
Option #2: Eva went to the symphony, because she enjoys music.
Option #3: Because she enjoys music, Eva went to the symphony.
Option #4: Eva went to the symphony; she enjoys music.

REMEMBER:

- ✓ Many fragments are made by simply tacking on extra information after an already complete sentence.
- ✓ Most fragments can be caught just by proofreading. Try reading your work aloud!
- ✓ Check for subjects, verbs, and special words.
- ✓ Double-check your fixed fragments to make sure they are now complete.