

Fragments That Contain No Subject

Examples: Runs two miles every morning. (fragment)

Ate all of the pizza herself. (fragment)

To add clarity, you can change the fragment to a sentence simply by *adding a subject*—someone who “runs” or someone who “ate.”

Steve runs two miles every morning. (sentence)

Theresa ate all of the pizza herself. (sentence)

Note A command is a sentence, not a fragment, although the subject “you” is not stated.

(You) close the door, please. (sentence)

EXERCISE 1

Change the following fragments to sentences by adding a subject.

Example:

hand, Ellen often

On the other hand, often waited for class to begin.

1. Perhaps even gave them a new perspective on life.
2. Then left the car in the middle of the road.
3. Suddenly and frantically searched for his girlfriend.
4. Furthermore, seems like a good idea.
5. Also gave us a new perspective on life.

Fragments That Have No Verb

Some fragments have no verb and can often be thought of as “tag-ons” or “after thoughts.”

Examples: The soft, furry kitten. (fragment)

The soft, furry kitten in the basket. (fragment)

To correct these fragments, you can **add a verb** (and other words, if needed).

The soft, furry kitten in the basket **cried**.

The soft, furry kitten **was** in the basket.

Very often when you are writing, these fragments without a main verb become “tag-on” thoughts that belong with another sentence. The words in bold type in the following examples are fragments which you can easily add to the previous sentence.

He did not give us a number. **An exact number.**

The child looked longingly at the kitten. **The kitten in the basket.**

Rusty opened a store. **Her own store.**

The best way to correct these fragmented “tag-on” thoughts is to **combine the fragment with a complete sentence** (usually the one before or after it).

He did not give us **an exact number.**

The child looked longingly at the soft, furry **kitten in the basket.**

Rusty opened **her own store.**

Note Eliminating these fragments also eliminates a kind of wordiness that distracts from your writing.

EXERCISE 2

Revise the “tag-on” thoughts in the following paragraphs by combining them with another sentence.

Paragraph 1

Richard was looking for something in the refrigerator. Something to fix for lunch. He found luncheon meat and cheese. Mozzarella cheese. Red juicy tomatoes and sweet white onions. He looked further for lettuce. Crisp lettuce. Underneath the lettuce, he found a package. A package of bacon. If he could find the mayonnaise, he could make a sandwich. A “house special” sandwich.

Paragraph 2

I felt excited as I entered my spot. My favourite spot. I plucked ripe blackberries. Blackberries from the heavy vines. Nearby, I heard a stream flowing. Overhead, clouds comforted me as they appeared in the sky. White, billowy clouds. Oak trees and pine trees provided shade as I sat on the soft pine needles. Needles on the gently sloping ground. I ate the blackberries still in my hands, and as I ate them, I saw the stains. Stains left by the purple, juicy berries. But I didn't care, for I was surrounded by the freshness. The freshness of nature.

Fragments with Verb Forms That Cannot Be the Main Verb

Some verb forms cannot be used as main verbs in a sentence. If you use them as main verbs, you will create fragments.

Verb Forms That Cannot Be Main Verbs

1. the “-ing” form of a verb used alone
 2. “to” before a verb
- The “-ing” form of the verb used alone cannot be the main verb in a sentence.

Bill going to the gym after school. (fragment)

Going to the ice-cream store. (fragment)

To be used as a main verb, this “-ing” form must be linked to some “be” verb.

“Be” Verbs

is	are	were	has been
am	was	had been	have been

For example, if you convert the fragment “Bill going to the gym after school” to “Bill is going to the gym after school,” you have a complete sentence, and the fragment has been eliminated.

You can correct these fragmented sentences in a variety of ways. The choice of how to revise them depends on the meaning you would like to communicate in your sentence. Here are some ways to correct the fragment “Going to the ice-cream store.”

First, you could add a **subject** and some form of the verb “be.”

Bill is going to the ice-cream store.

You can make the **fragment the subject** and add a **main verb**. (You may want to add other words to make the meaning clear.)

Going to the ice-cream store makes the children happy.

Or you could add a **complete sentence (subject and a verb)** after the “-ing” verb phrase.

Going to the ice-cream store, **Bill met his girlfriend**.

Note In the above example, the “-ing” verb form must refer to the subject in the sentence that it is linked to.

EXERCISE 3

Revise the following fragments using these same patterns.

Example:

Walking to the bus stop.

Lori is walking to the bus stop.

Add a subject and some form of the verb "be."

Walking to the bus stop invigorates me.

Make the fragment the subject and add a main verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Walking to the bus stop, I counted six rabbits.

Add a sentence (subject and a verb) after the fragment.

1. Playing chess.

Add a subject and some form of the verb "be."

Make the fragment the subject and add a main verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Add a sentence (subject and a verb) after the fragment.

2. Collecting aluminum cans.

Add a subject and some form of the verb "be."

Make the fragment the subject and add a main verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Add a sentence (subject and a verb) after the fragment.

3. Welcoming his friends.

Add a subject and some form of the verb "be."

Make the fragment the subject and add a main verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Add a sentence (subject and a verb) after the fragment.

4. Running for political office.

Add a subject and some form of the verb "be."

Make the fragment the subject and add a main verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Add a sentence (subject and a verb) after the fragment.

5. Typing a research paper.

Add a subject and some form of the verb "be."

Make the fragment the subject and add a main verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Add a sentence (subject and a verb) after the fragment.

6. Writing my name.

Add a subject and some form of the verb "be."

Make the fragment the subject and add a main verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Add a sentence (subject and a verb) after the fragment.

- "To" plus a verb cannot be the main verb in a sentence.

To fish at the lake. (fragment)

Based on your sentence meaning, you may revise these types of fragments in any of the following ways.

First, you could **link the fragment to a complete sentence.**

To fish at the lake, **Rene bought a fishing licence.**

You could add both a subject and a verb.

Bill likes to fish at the lake.

Or you could make the fragment the subject and add a verb. Be sure to add any other needed words.

To fish at the lake is relaxing.

EXERCISE 4

Revise the following fragments using these same patterns.

Example:

To get the work done.

To get the work done, Ralph hired new men.
Link the fragment to a complete sentence.

Ralph wanted to get the work done.
Add both a subject and a verb.

To get the work done cost a lot of money.
Make the fragment the subject and add a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

1. To say a kind word.

Link the fragment to a complete sentence.

Add both a subject and a verb.

Make the fragment the subject and add a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

2. To get all of my work done.

Link the fragment to a complete sentence.

Add both a subject and a verb.

Make the fragment the subject and add a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

3. To win the lottery.

Link the fragment to a complete sentence.

Add both a subject and a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Make the fragment the subject and add a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

4. To master the keyboard.

Link the fragment to a complete sentence.

Add both a subject and a verb.

Make the fragment the subject and add a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

5. To play hockey.

Link the fragment to a complete sentence.

Add both a subject and a verb.

Make the fragment the subject and add a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

6. To sleep late in the mornings.

Link the fragment to a complete sentence.

Add both a subject and a verb.

Make the fragment the subject and add a verb. (Add other words if needed.)

Fragments That Have Both a Subject and Verb but Are Preceded by a Subordinator

Some fragments have both a subject and a verb but are preceded by a subordinator.

Example: **When** I get my paycheque. (fragment)

This fragment does not state a complete thought. For example, if you walked into a room and said to a friend, "When I get my paycheque," the person you are speaking to would expect to know "what about 'when I get my paycheque'?"

However, if you complete this thought by adding a sentence, your meaning will be clear.

When I get my paycheque, **we will go shopping.** or

We will go shopping when I get my paycheque.

(“We will go shopping” is a complete sentence that can stand alone.)

In these fragments, the subordinator makes the thought incomplete. (You will learn more about subordinators later in this unit.) Here is a list of subordinators that change a complete sentence into a fragment:

Subordinators

after	in order that	whether
although	since	which
as	so that	whichever
as if	that	who
as long as	though	whoever
as soon as	till	whom
as though	unless	whomever
because	until	whose
before	what	whosoever
even though	whatever	why
how	when	
if	where	

EXERCISE 5

Revise the following fragments by linking them to a complete sentence.

Example:

When the work is done, we will celebrate.

- As soon as I finish my homework, _____
- Unless I can fix my car, _____
- Even though his birthday is on Saturday, _____
- So that I can go to the movies, _____
- Before the day is over, _____
- After I learn to cook, _____
- If Ranjit will send us the information, _____
- Until you buy insurance for your car, _____

9. If the price is right, _____
10. Even though the movie was long, _____

The best practice for revising fragments is to work on your own paragraphs. However, you can practise by correcting the following sample paragraphs and then applying the practice to your own paragraphs.

EXERCISE 6

For the following sample paragraphs, do one or more of the following: (1) add a subject, a verb, or both a subject and a verb, or (2) combine the fragment with a sentence before it or with a sentence after it.

Paragraph 1

I found that setting up an aquarium is expensive. After buying the tank, light, filter, and heater. I had other initial expenses. I needed to purchase chemicals. Chemicals to eliminate chlorine and to reduce the acidity. I made the tank attractive. Adding coloured gravel and plants. Adding ceramic figures. Placing a nice background behind the glass. To test the water and to keep the tank water at the right temperature. Adding a variety of fish with beautiful colours. When everything was set up. I had fun. The aquarium can provide a centre of enjoyment.

Paragraph 2

Putting on a play takes a lot of work from everyone. Actors must learn their lines. In addition, they must "become" the person they are portraying. Also, building and painting flats. Takes the crew many hours. They must also make sure all of the sound effects are realistically delivered. Delivered on time. If there are many people in the cast. Everybody must work long hours sewing the costumes. However, when everyone works hard. The finished product is rewarding. Very rewarding.

Run-On Sentences

A second type of sentence-structure problem is the **run-on sentence**. The term "run-on" explains the mistake; two sentences have been run together. In other words, no punctuation mark separates the independent thoughts.

The assignment was easy it took only a couple of hours to complete.
(run-on sentence)

In this run-on sentence there are two independent thoughts about the assignment. One is that it was easy, and the other is that it took only a couple of hours to complete. Two sentences have been written as one sentence. Here is one way to express these two thoughts:

The assignment was easy. It took only a couple of hours to complete.

One misunderstanding that some writers have is that if ideas are related to each other, they should be written as one sentence. Look at the following ideas.

My cousin is coming to Alberta she wants to visit the Rockies. (run-on sentence)

These two ideas (coming to Alberta and visiting the Rockies) are related, but they should be two separate sentences. Each idea has a subject and a verb and is an independent thought:

My cousin is coming to Alberta. She wants to visit the Rockies.

Another misunderstanding writers have concerning run-on sentences is that if the idea is short, it cannot be two sentences. However, sentences are determined by whether or not they have a subject and a verb, not by length.

If you say "We should hurry we are late," you have two sentences. "We should hurry" is one sentence with its own subject and verb. "We are late" is another sentence with its own subject and verb.

We should hurry. We are late.

It is important that your writing is free of run-on sentences because if you have not identified where one sentence ends and another begins, your reader may misinterpret your thoughts. You may revise these run-on sentences in several ways.

Ways to Revise Run-On Sentences

Add a period at the end of each complete thought.

Use a comma and a connecting word called a coordinate conjunction.

Use a semicolon.

Use a semicolon, a connecting word called a conjunctive adverb, and a comma.

Use a subordinator.

Note A list of conjunctive adverbs precedes Exercise 10, and a list of subordinators precedes Exercise 5.

Adding a Period at the End of Each Complete Thought

The simplest way of dealing with this problem is to add a period at the end of each complete thought. For practice, complete the following exercise.

EXERCISE 7

Identify the place where the first sentence ends and the second sentence begins. Then revise each run-on sentence by adding a period after the first sentence and by beginning the second sentence with a capital letter.

Example:

chores. They
 The girls chose their ~~chores~~ they did them rapidly.

1. He wanted to ride his bike she wanted to walk.
2. We don't want to wait we want to rent a boat.
3. I feel sorry for Claude he had his tonsils out.
4. The phone rang it was in the other room.
5. Michelle sang in the talent show she danced, also.
6. The computers in the lab were all working the ones in the middle worked the best.
7. My cat had kittens we had to find homes for them.
8. We went to the store we bought bread.
9. Sam came over we played football.
10. Father came home we watched television.

Using a Comma and a Coordinate Conjunction

Another way of revising run-on sentences is to connect them with a comma and an appropriate coordinate conjunction.

Coordinate Conjunctions

for	but
and	or
nor	yet
	so