Sentence Fragments
What is a Sentence?

A sentence requires

• A **Subject** (tells you who or what the sentence is about)

• A **Verb** (expresses action, tells what the subject does, or links the subject to other descriptive words, or describes a state of being)

   *Note: Sometimes you may have more than one subject and/or more than one verb.*

• A Statement of a complete thought

• Examples:

  ➢ After class, **Jason and I are meeting** for lunch. (a compound subject)
  ➢ I **have** to work today from noon until ten o’clock. (one subject, one verb)
  ➢ The **debate lasted** for four hours and **highlighted** the different policies of each candidate. (two verbs)
What is a Fragment?

Just as a bowl that shatters to the floor may break into pieces, a sentence fragment is a piece of a sentence. It often lacks a verb. It may lack a subject. Or it could have a subject and verb but not express a complete thought.
Examples of Fragments

• Example: I going to the mall to shop. (not a complete verb)

• Example: Spending lots of money at my favorite store. (no subject)

• Example: While I am shopping (subject and verb are present but this group of words cannot stand alone independently and does not express a complete thought).
Other Examples of Fragments

- I heading to the mall (not a complete verb)

- After I finish my classes for the day (not a complete thought)

- For example, tennis, basketball, and baseball (no subject or verb)

- Going to the country for the weekend (no subject and not a complete verb)

Note: If you write fragments in your essays, your teacher may write Frag (a common editing symbol) in the margin to call attention to the error. You need to learn to recognize them and to be able to correct them.
Can You Identify Fragments?

- Which of these is a sentence fragment?
  - He listened.
  - She telling a joke.
  - Because she had experience.
  - Saddleback, El Camino, Coastline, and Cypress.
  - After lunch, I will leave.
• If you selected the middle three, you are correct.

• **He listened** is a complete sentence for it has a subject and a verb and it expresses a complete thought.

• **She telling a joke** is a fragment for it does not have a complete verb. This could be corrected by adding “is” or “was”: **“is telling”** or **“was telling.”**

• Because **she had** experience is a fragment; even though it has a subject and verb, it does not express a complete thought.

• **Saddleback, El Camino, Coastline, and Cypress** is a fragment because there is no subject or verb.

• **After lunch, I will leave** is correct (has subject and verb and expresses a complete thought).
Let’s look at the difference between an independent and a dependent clause. Both are groups of words containing a subject and a verb. However, an independent clause can stand alone as a sentence; it is independent in that way. Every sentence must have, therefore, at least one independent clause.

Remember: Each sentence must contain at least one independent clause.
Some common words that indicate a dependent (or subordinate clause) are as follows:

- Because
- When
- Although
- Whenever
- Even though
- Relative pronouns (who, which, that)
- Since
- After
- Until
- If
- As
Examples of Dependent Clause Fragments

- Because I have to get my car fixed.
- Although it appears to be running smoothly.
- Until you can pick me up from practice.
- When she jogged past the couple.
- If he is able to complete all his required classes.
How to Correct Dependent Clause Fragments

- If you write a dependent clause, you must attach it to an independent clause so that you have a grammatically correct sentence.
How to Correct Dependent Clause Fragments

You must attach them to an independent clause. Let’s look at the fragments from the last slide.

• Because I have to get my car fixed, I will need to take the bus to school this week. (corrected)

• My car smells funny when I drive it although it appears to be running smoothly. (corrected)
• I will study in the library until you can pick me up from practice. (corrected)

• When she jogged past the couple, she noticed that they were arguing. (corrected)

• Ryan will graduate this year if he is able to complete all his required classes. (corrected)
Other Common Types of Fragments

Phrase Fragment: a phrase is a group of words without a subject and/or verb

Here are some examples:

• After the rain
• Into the fire
• Worked with clay
• A big, fluffy dog
Add the missing subject or verb

Attach the phrase to a sentence coming before or after (if appropriate).

- After the rain, a rainbow appeared.
- He rushed into the fire.
- She worked with clay.
- I would love to have a big, fluffy dog.
This type of fragment gives information about a sentence which came before. It usually is missing a subject or a verb or both. This type of fragment often begins with words and phrases such as these:
Words/Phrases That May Lead to Explanatory Fragments

- As well as
- Especially
- Except
- Also
- For example
- For instance
- Including
- Like
- Such as
- Particularly
Examples of Explanatory Fragments

• As well as my sister Jan.
• Also, Chemistry 11 and World History.
• Especially apple pie with ice cream.
• For example, my experience last summer at the mall.
• Like my reaction to my allergy medicine.
• Including all my relatives and my neighbors.
• Except my boyfriend and my best friend.
How to Correct This Type of Fragment

1. Add the missing subject or verb or both.
2. Attach the explanation to the previous sentence.

I am taking English, Math 200, and also Chemistry 11 and World History (Corrected)

Many people have allergies to food, pollen, and also medications, like my reaction to my allergy medicine. (Corrected)

I love many desserts, especially apple pie with ice cream. (Corrected)
1. **Phrase** - a group of words that cannot stand alone. A phrase is missing a subject or verb or both.

2. **Clause** - a group of words that does contain a subject and a verb. There are two types.
   - Independent Clause — can stand independently.
   - Dependent Clause — cannot stand alone and must be attached to an independent clause.

3. **Fragment** - a piece of a sentence. It may lack a subject or verb or it may not be able to stand alone and does not express a complete thought. Every sentence must have at least one independent clause.
You might notice sentence fragments in some types of writing. For instance, in the popular book *Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, the first chapter contains a number of fragments:

“Or at least distrusts me.” (3)

“Entrails. No hissing.” (4)

“Just a squirrel.” (7)

“Pretty dress,” says Gale. (12)

Are these errors?
Fragments can be acceptable in certain types of writing—novels, short stories, informal writing, or other writing that records speech. For instance, you may find fragments

- In dialogue: “Hello.” “Goodbye.”
- In questions and answers: “Coming?” “Sure.”
- In exclamations: Hurrah! Oh, no! Yeah!

**Important Note:** Writers, such as Collins, do, at times, use fragments for dramatic effect. However, in the writing you do for classroom assignments, you should avoid writing sentence fragments.
Review: How to Correct Fragments

Add the missing subject or verb or both.

Sometimes (if it makes sense) you can attach the fragment to a sentence that comes before or after.

- It is important that you can recognize fragments in your writing and correct them as you edit your papers.

- If you are in the lab, please see an assistant for a quiz to test your knowledge of fragments.
References

