

020 Grammar 02 - Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments are clauses that *cannot stand on their own as complete thoughts, i.e., as a full sentence*. These incomplete clauses are defined as sentences that lack either a *subject* (an actor) or a *verb* (an action). To fix a sentence fragment, identify which element the clause is missing for completion, and rephrase.

The following fragments lack a *subject* or *actor*.

1. Driving in Baltimore during rush hour.
2. Spent too much time playing online games.
3. Such as walking, running, and playing golf.

The fragments below lack a *verb* or *action*

1. John, Billy, and Francis.
2. The city council member in our district.
3. The daycare center coordinator.

A more complicated, but more common form of sentence fragment is what is called a *dependent clause fragment*.

A *dependent clause* is a sentence that has a subject and verb, but cannot stand on its own as a complete sentence. This is usually because the clause begins with a *preposition*, a word that signals a logical relation between two ideas. A clause beginning with a preposition and containing only a single idea is *dependent* on another idea to be a complete sentence.



The following fragments are *dependent clause fragments*. The red words are prepositions, which make the clauses dependent on an idea that is not present:

1. **After** Jason bought his anatomy textbook.
2. **Since** the party last night ended.
3. **Before** he was able to regain his status.
4. **If** you want to go to the party.
5. **When** the circus came to town.
6. **Because** he was angry at his best friend.

Identifying Fragments

In many cases, identifying fragments requires that you read each sentence in your piece very carefully, and to ensure that each sentence has a subject and a verb—an “actor” and an “action” that the actor executes.

Exercise: Identifying Sentence Fragments

Read the following selections and indicate whether or not each is a sentence fragment.

1. When John got his diploma. Fragment? Y / N
2. My wife dressed up the dog as a reindeer last Christmas. Fragment? Y / N
3. The wall falling apart. Fragment? Y / N
4. Such as playing video games or surfing the web. Fragment? Y / N
5. Dreaming of a better life for his children. Fragment? Y / N
6. Dreaming of a better life for his children, Petrov moved from the Ukraine to western Michigan. Fragment? Y / N
7. Up behind the convenience store. Fragment? Y / N
8. Listening carefully, watching intently, waiting patiently, investigating impressively. Fragment? Y / N
9. The cup was full of coffee. Fragment? Y / N
10. Went for drinks. Fragment? Y / N

Fixing Fragments

Fixing sentence fragments requires ensuring that each sentence has a subject and verb, and identifiable actor and an action for that actor to do.

Exercise: Correcting Sentence Fragments

Revise the following sentence fragments to form complete thoughts with a subject and verb. Add subjects or verbs as necessary to correct these fragments.

1. Walking through the park during the late afternoon.

2. Spent too much money on fast food last week.

3. Such as lobster, crab, mussels, and fried oysters.

4. Wallpaper, drywall, molding, and paint.

5. The state assemblyperson for the northwest region of Baltimore County.

6. The daycare center coordinator.

7. After Jason bought his anatomy textbook.

8. Since the party last night ended.

9. Before he was able to regain his status.

10. If you want to go to the party.
