

FRAGMENTS

Seeing What You Know

Underline the statement in each item that you think is *not* a complete sentence. Then read the explanations below.

1. After the shopping mall opened. Several local stores went out of business.
2. The nursing student poked my arm four times. Trying to take a blood sample. I was beginning to feel like a pincushion.
3. Some young people are learning old-fashioned dances. Such as the waltz, polka, and Lindy.
4. The manager always wears a suit and tie to the office. Then takes off his jacket and tie by ten o'clock.

Understanding the Answers

1. *After the shopping mall opened* is not a complete sentence.
The writer does not follow through and complete the thought by telling us what happened after the shopping mall opened. Correct the fragment by adding it to the sentence that follows it.
2. *Trying to take a blood sample* is not a complete sentence.
The word group lacks both a subject and a verb, and it does not express a complete thought. Correct the fragment by adding it to the sentence that precedes it.
3. *Such as the waltz, polka, and Lindy* is not a complete sentence.
Again, the word group lacks a subject and a verb, and it does not express a complete thought. Correct the fragment by adding it to the sentence that precedes it.
4. *Then takes off his jacket and tie by ten o'clock* is not a complete sentence.
The word group lacks a subject. Correct the fragment by adding the subject *he*.

To be a complete sentence, a group of words must contain a subject and a verb. It must also express a complete thought—in other words, it must make sense by itself. A **fragment** is *less than a sentence* because it lacks a subject, lacks a verb, or does not express a complete thought. This chapter describes the most common types of fragments: dependent-word fragments, *-ing* and *to* fragments, added-detail fragments, and missing-subject fragments.

Dependent-word Fragments

Although dependent-word fragments contain a subject and a verb, they do not express a complete thought. To complete the thought, they depend on another statement, usually one that comes after the fragment. For instance, below is a word group that starts with the dependent word *because*. The incomplete thought it expresses is completed in the statement that follows it.

Because there was a mosquito in the room. I could not fall asleep.

The dependent-word group is a fragment because it does not express a complete thought. It leaves the reader expecting something more. The writer must follow through *in the same sentence* and tell what happened because there was a mosquito in the room. In the sentence below, the writer has corrected the fragment by completing the thought in one sentence:

Because there was a mosquito in the room, I could not fall asleep.

Here is a list of some common dependent words:

Dependent Words

although	even though	so that	what	whether
as	how	that	when	which
because	if	though	whenever	while
before	in order that	unless	where	who
after	Even if	since	until	wherever

Whenever you begin a statement with a dependent word, make sure that you complete your thought. Look at the following examples:

- a) Although we had eaten a full meal. We still ordered dessert. The rum cake was irresistible.
- b) Some people are victims of migraine headaches. That force them to lie motionless in bed for many hours. Medications do not offer much relief.

The word groups that begin with the dependent words *although* and *that* are fragments. Neither word group expresses a complete thought. The reader wants to know *what happened* although a full meal had been eaten and *what* forces people to lie motionless in bed for many hours.

A common way to correct a dependent-word fragment is to connect it to the sentence that comes before or after it. For example,

- i. Although we had eaten a full **meal**, **we** still ordered dessert. The rum cake was irresistible.
- ii. Some people are victims of migraine **headaches that** force them to lie motionless in bed for many hours. Medications do not offer much relief.

Punctuation note Put a comma at the end of a dependent-word group that starts a sentence. (See the first example above.)

Practice 1

Underline the dependent-word fragment in each of the following. Then correct it on the lines provided.

1. When the hometown baseball team won the World Series. Two million people showed up at the victory parade.

2. Because smoke detectors are so important to a family's safety. Their batteries should be checked often.

3. After the children washed the family car. They had a water fight with the wet sponges.

4. Please hang up the damp towel. That you just threw on the floor.

-ING AND TO FRAGMENTS

- a) When *-ing* or *to* appears at or near the beginning of a word group, a fragment may result. Consider this example:

- b) Cliff sat by the telephone for hours. Hoping that Lisa would call.

The first statement is a complete sentence. However, the second word group is not a complete thought, so it cannot stand on its own as a sentence.

Consider the following example as well:

To balance their checkbooks without making mistakes. Many people use pocket calculators.

The second statement is a complete sentence. But the first word group lacks a subject and verb *and* fails to express a complete thought.

There are two ways to correct *-ing* and *to* fragments:

a Connect an *-ing* or a *to* fragment to the sentence it explains.

- a) Cliff sat by the telephone for **hours, hoping** that Lisa would call.
- b) To balance their checkbooks without making **mistakes, many** people use pocket calculators.

b Create a complete sentence by adding a subject and a verb to the fragment. To do so, revise the material as necessary.

- a) Cliff sat by the telephone for hours. **He hoped** that Lisa would call.
- b) Many people use pocket calculators. **They want** to balance their check- books without making mistakes.

Practice 2

Underline the *-ing* or *to* fragment in each of the following. Then correct it on the lines provided, using one of the two methods given above.

- i. Police officers stood near the corner. Directing people around the accident.

- ii. The magician ran a sword through the box. To prove no one was hiding inside.

- iii. Sitting quietly on the couch. The dog didn't look as if he'd eaten my sandwich.

- iv. The restaurant has introduced a new vegetarian menu. To attract diners who prefer not to eat meat.

ADDED-DETAIL FRAGMENTS

Another common kind of fragment often begins with one of the following words: *like, including, especially, also, for example, for instance, except, without, or such as*.

- a) Almost everyone loves ice cream. Especially vanilla.
- b) Many college students experience a great deal of stress. For instance, about money, grades, and personal relationships.

In the above examples, the second word group lacks both a subject and a verb. There are two ways to correct an added-detail fragment:

a Simply add the fragment to the sentence it explains. In most cases, use a comma to set off the fragment from the rest of the sentence.

Almost everyone loves ice **cream, especially** vanilla.

b Create a new sentence by adding a subject and verb to the fragment.

Many college students experience a great deal of stress. For instance, **they worry** about money, grades, and personal relationships.

Practice 3

Underline the added-detail fragment in each of the following. Then correct it on the lines provided, using one of the two methods given above.

1. Television censors watch out for material that viewers might find offensive.
Such as sexual or racial jokes.

2. The children's toys were everywhere. Except in the toy chest.

3. All applicants at that company must take a skills assessment test. Also a personality profile test.

4. The film class saw every Dustin Hoffman film. Including his first one, *The Graduate*.

MISSING-SUBJECT FRAGMENTS

Some word groups are fragments because, while they do have a verb, they lack a subject. Here are examples:

- I. The telephone caller kept asking questions. But did not identify herself.
- II. The children dug a large hole in the grass. And then tried to fill it with water.

There are two ways to correct a missing-subject fragment:

- a** Connect the missing-subject fragment to the sentence it follows.

The telephone caller kept asking **questions but** did not identify herself.

The children dug a large hole in the **grass and** then tried to fill it with water.

- b** Create a new sentence by adding a subject to the fragment. Normally, you will add a pronoun standing for the subject of the previous sentence.

The telephone caller kept asking questions. **She** did not identify herself.

The children dug a large hole in the grass. Then **they** tried to fill it with water.

Practice 4

Underline the missing-subject fragment in each of the following items. Then correct it on the lines below, using one of the two methods given above.

- 1. Our instructor seems strict. But is actually friendly and helpful.

- 2. A mouse's face popped out of a hole near the sink. Then disappeared quickly.

- 3. The nurse brought the patient an extra pillow and a glass of water. But forgot his pain medication.

- 4. The pot of coffee sat on the burner for hours. And became too strong and bitter to drink.

Note Not all word groups beginning with *and*, *but*, *so*, or another joining word are fragments. A sentence beginning with a joining word is grammatically complete—and correct—if both a subject and a verb follow the joining word.

■ Fragments: Test-1

Underline the fragment in each item that follows. Then correct the fragment, using one of the methods described in the chapter.

Note To help you recognize and correct these fragments, directions are given for half of the items.

1. Before the tornado appeared. The air became perfectly still.

The first word group begins with the dependent word *Before*. Correct the fragment by adding it to the second word group.

2. Until an American reaches the age of eighteen. He or she cannot vote in a presidential election.

3. To let students get home before the storm. The school dismissed classes early.

The first word group lacks a subject and verb. Connect it to the complete statement that follows it.

4. To make a long story short. I got the job.

5. Every surface in the apartment was cluttered. Including the top of the stove.

The second word group lacks a subject and verb. Connect it to the complete statement that comes before it.

6. The six-year-old girl already loves to read. Especially books about animals.

7. Near the end of the race, the runner felt a cramp developing in her leg. But gritted her teeth and continued running.

Add a subject to the second word group to make it a complete thought.

8. The party had barely gotten started. And was already so noisy that the neighbors were complaining.

■ Fragments: Test 2

Underline the fragment in each item that follows. Then correct the fragment, using one of the methods described in the chapter.

- i. After last week's heat and humidity. Today's cold and rainy weather is actually a relief.

- ii. Often barking all night. The neighbor's dog has become a serious nuisance.

- iii. The restaurant specializes in Mexican food. Including burritos, tacos, and refried beans.

- iv. The moon rose, full and silvery. And cast its magical light over the countryside.

- v. Hundreds of people called the radio station. Hoping to win the concert tickets.

- vi. All the food in the refrigerator will certainly spoil. Unless the power comes back on soon.

- vii. If you see a penny lying on the sidewalk. Do you leave it there or pick it up?

- viii. The luscious-looking cake was covered with a cherry glaze. And decorated with sugar swans.

■ Fragments: Test 3

Underline the **two** fragments in each short passage that follows. Then correct the fragments, using one of the methods described in the chapter.

Note To help you recognize and correct fragments, explanations are given for two of the passages.

1. My phone rang at least ten times this morning. Then was silent the rest of the day. I finally called the telephone company. To see if my phone was out of order.

The word group beginning with *Then was silent* needs a subject. The word group beginning with *To see* needs a subject and verb. It can be added to the previous sentence.

2. Although hot dogs, french fries, and rich ice cream are not healthy foods. They're still favorites for many Americans. People are determined to enjoy themselves. And don't want to hear about fat and cholesterol.

3. Sarita boasts that she can read a book in one evening. But she doesn't read the whole book. For example, a chapter here and a page there. She misses a lot of the book's detail. Because she skips parts that she thinks won't interest her.

The word group starting with *For example* needs a subject and verb. The word group starting with *Because*, a dependent word, needs to be added to the sentence it explains.

4. Many people have poor telephone manners. Such as beginning all of their conversations by saying, "Who's this?" Some people don't ask if their call has come at a convenient time. Or identify themselves when calling.

■ **Fragments: Test 4**

Underline the **two** fragments in each short passage that follows. Then correct the fragments, using one of the methods described in the chapter.

1. Because members of a youth group in Finland once felt that Donald Duck was immoral. They tried to have Donald Duck cartoons banned from their town. They objected to the fact that Donald had been keeping company with Daisy Duck for more than fifty years. Without ever getting married.

2. Itching for several days. Mosquito bites are one of the little miseries of summer. The itch is the result of the mosquito's saliva. Which produces a mild allergic reaction in most people.

3. Although Western movies show cowboys as being mainly white and American-born. The facts about America's cowboys are otherwise. Many of the cowboys were black or Mexican. Also Native Americans.

4. In 1891, an English sailor was swallowed by a whale. And lived to tell the story. James Bartley survived for most of a day in the belly of a whale that his ship had been chasing. When the animal was butchered. Bartley was found unconscious but unharmed.
