

To identify and then correct basic sentence-level errors like **sentence fragments** (i.e. incomplete sentences) and **fused or run-on sentences**, you need to have a basic understanding of **subjects** and **verbs** and what constitutes a **clause and/or a phrase**. Appendix B of our Gurak and Lannon textbook is a great place to start. Also, read the information below from OWL and Capital Community College Foundation (which both have extensive resources on grammar).

**First**, understand what constitutes a SUBJECT and VERB:

- **SUBJECTS:** <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/subjects.htm>
- **VERBS:** <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/verbs.htm>

**Then**, understand the difference between PHRASES and CLAUSES: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/independent\\_and\\_dependent\\_clauses/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/independent_and_dependent_clauses/index.html)

**PHRASES** are groups of words that either have a subject or a verb, but not both. They are incomplete sentences and therefore cannot stand alone. There are several different types depending on how they act in a sentence.

**CLAUSES** contain a subject and verb. Some can stand alone as complete sentence, others cannot.

Independent clauses: contain S + V and express a complete thought, and therefore can be a complete sentence.

Dependent clauses contain S + V but not a complete thought because they begin with subordinate conjunctions. So if you see a dependent clause standing on its own, it is a fragment and needs to be reworked into a full sentence by connecting to an independent clause or rewriting.

Dependent clauses often begin with subordinating conjunctions: *after, although as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, if, if only, rather than, since, that, though, unless, until, when, where, whereas, whether, which and while.*

Dependent clauses can also begin with relative pronouns: *who/whom, whoever/whomever/whose, that and which. In some situations, what, when, and where can function as relative pronouns (OWL).*

**SENTENCE FRAGMENTS** are incomplete sentences. They are missing either a subject or verb or both. They do not express a complete thought.

Identify: (1) Solo dependent clause that starts with a subordinating conjunction or relative pronoun  
(2) Sentence w/o a verb  
(3) Sentence w/o a subject

Correct fragments by: (1) Adding a subject or verb  
(2) Joining the fragment to another sentence  
(3) Rewriting the fragment into a complete sentence

**COMMA SPLICES & FUSED SENTENCES** incorrectly connect two independent

clauses: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/punctuation/independent\\_and\\_dependent\\_clauses/runonsentences.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/punctuation/independent_and_dependent_clauses/runonsentences.html)

**Comma Splices** occur when two independent clauses are joined with a comma without necessary words (coordinating conjunctions or coordinating adverbs).

*The woman went to the store, she like the selection of hand bags.*

Correct comma splices by: (1) Making two sentences by adding a period  
(2) Joining two sentences with a semicolon  
(3) Adding a coordinating conjunction or adverb after the comma  
(4) Rewriting two sentences into one complete sentence

**Run-on Sentences** occur when two independent clauses are written as one sentence without appropriate punctuation and/or joining words. In other words, two sentences are incorrectly **fused** into one.

*The woman went to the store she like the selection of hand bags.*

Correct run-ons by: (1) Making two sentences with a period  
(2) Adding a semicolon between the two clauses  
(3) Inserting a comma and coordinating conjunction  
(4) Rewriting the sentenc