

After the separators, we'll look at these other marks of punctuation:

bullets • • •	** asterisks **
... ellipses ...	// slashes //
"quotation marks"	hy-phens
a pos' tro phes	<u>underlining</u>
<i>italics</i>	abbrev. words
#% symbols &@	5,6 numbers 7,8

Lots of fun is in store! Okay, it may not be as much fun as rollerblading with your friends or munching on popcorn, but hopefully it will be painless.

SENTENCES, FRAGMENTS, PHRASES, AND CLAUSES

How can you tell a complete sentence from an incomplete sentence? Usually your ear will tell you when a sentence is complete.

INCOMPLETE SENTENCE (FRAGMENT):

Two miles.
(What? Who does what for two miles? I don't get it. This is not complete.)

INCOMPLETE SENTENCE (FRAGMENT):

Two miles every day.
(I still don't get it. Two miles every day where? Why? Who? Tell me more.)

INCOMPLETE SENTENCE (FRAGMENT):

Two miles every day, rain or shine.
(I don't care about the weather! Tell me who is doing what.)



COMPLETE SENTENCE:

I run.
(This is a very simple sentence, but it has a subject [I] and a verb [run]. We know what happened and who did it.)

COMPLETE SENTENCE:

I run two miles.
(Here is the same sentence with a little more information. There's no confusion here.)

COMPLETE SENTENCE:

I run two miles every day, rain or shine.
(Here is the same sentence with even more information, and it's still very clear.)

A complete sentence must have a subject and a verb.

What is a verb? (For more about verbs, see page 23.) It is a word that expresses one of two things:

- action: jump, scream, fly, run
- state of being: appear, seem, feel

What is a subject? It can be any of the following things. (In each example, the subject is underlined.)

- The person who does the action in the sentence: Josh serves the tennis ball.
- The thing that does the action in the sentence: The ball zips through the air.
- The person being described in the sentence: Josh is happy about his powerful serve.
- The thing being described in the sentence: The ball is happy when the point is over and it can rest!

Subjects can come in many different packages. (In each example, the subject is underlined.)

- One noun as the subject: The dog barks.
- Two nouns as the subject (this is called a compound subject, which just means it has more than one part): The dog and cat are both making noise and keeping us awake.
- One pronoun as the subject: She can't sleep because of all the noise.

- Two pronouns as the subject (this is another type of compound subject): He and she are both still awake because of those noisy animals.
- A phrase: Staying awake all night is no fun.
- A clause: What makes me mad is all this noise!

Sometimes the subject “hides” from you. It’s there, but you have to use your imagination.

- Run! (What do you think the subject is? It is *you*. The sentence could read *You run!* But that’s not how we speak or write. We leave out the word *you*, but everybody knows it’s there—hiding.)
- Eat your spinach. (When your mom or dad says this to you, you know exactly what the subject is. Who is supposed to eat the spinach? *You* are, and *you* is the hidden subject of the sentence.)



What is the difference between a clause and a phrase?

A clause has a subject and a verb; a phrase doesn’t.

CLAUSE:

until I turn sixteen

(This has a subject [I] and a verb [turn], but you’re left dangling, aren’t you? It’s not a complete sentence. This is

- called a dependent clause. It depends on something else to make a complete sentence.)

COMPLETE SENTENCE:

I can’t drive until I turn sixteen.

(Now we know what’s going on!)

PHRASE:

my big fat mouth

(We just saw that a clause has a subject and a verb.

There’s no verb here; this is called a phrase. It could be the start of a great sentence, but it needs some help. It needs some action.)

COMPLETE SENTENCE:

My big fat mouth got me into a bunch of trouble again.

(Now there’s some action! It might not be the kind of action you like, but it makes a very clear, complete sentence.)

Let’s see how complete sentences are built.

PHRASE:

my brand new kitten

(There’s no verb here—no action word. What does the kitten do?)

DEPENDENT CLAUSE:

when I come home from school

(This has a subject [I] and a verb [come], but your ear tells you it is not a whole sentence. What happens when you come home from school?)

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE #1:

When I come home from school, my brand new kitten jumps all over me.

(This is a whole, complete sentence—also called an independent clause. It is independent because it doesn’t need anything else in order to be a sentence.)

PHRASE:

my pet parrot

(There’s no verb here. This could be interesting, but we need some action and some more information to know what’s going on.)

DEPENDENT CLAUSE:

whom I call Lady Bird

(We have a subject [I] and a verb [call], but this clause doesn't make a bit of sense without more information. It's dependent on the rest of the sentence to make sense.)

PHRASE:

flies off her perch, lands on my shoulder, and begs for sunflower seeds

(Now we're cooking, but we're still confused. There's a lot of action [*flies*, *lands*, and *begs* are all verbs], but there's no subject—no noun or pronoun. We don't know who or what is doing all this.)

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE #2:

My pet parrot, whom I call Lady Bird, flies off her perch, lands on my shoulder, and begs for sunflower seeds.

(This is a whole, complete sentence.)

INDEPENDENT CLAUSE #3:

When I come home from school, my brand new kitten jumps all over me, and my pet parrot, whom I call Lady Bird, flies off her perch, lands on my shoulder, and begs for sunflower seeds.

(Two independent clauses are often put together. Why do we join them? To make more interesting sentences!)



Is it a sentence or is it a fragment? Sometimes it all depends on a comma.

FRAGMENT:

Soon after Kacey fell asleep.

(This is a clause with a subject and a verb, but it's not a complete sentence.)

SENTENCE:

Soon after, Kacey fell asleep.

(This is an introductory phrase [*soon after*] followed by an independent clause.)

FRAGMENT:

Before I went shopping.

(This is a clause with a subject and a verb, but it's not a complete sentence.)

SENTENCE:

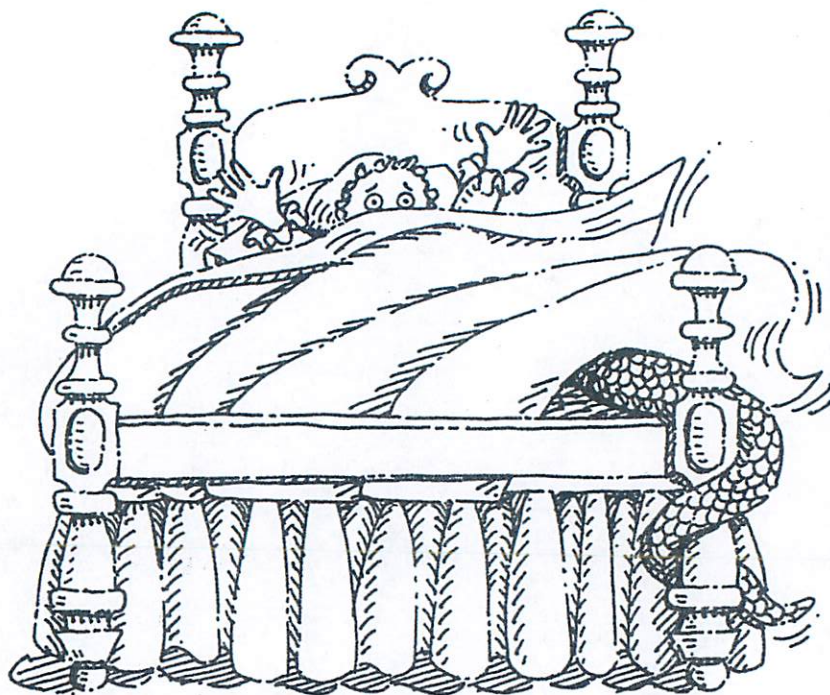
Before, I went shopping.

(This is an introductory adverb [*before*] followed by an independent clause.)

There are three times when it is okay to use fragments.

- Fragments are sometimes used effectively for emphasis.
Katie thought she heard a brontosaurus outside her bedroom door. She gathered her courage and slowly walked to her door. She opened it. Yes! In fact, things were worse than she'd feared. Two of them!
- Fragments are fine if you're writing informal dialogue because fragments are, in fact, a common part of our everyday speech.
Syman asked, "More fries for you?" I have some I don't want."
"Sure." Marshall's hand reached for the fries.
"Full?" asked Syman a few minutes later.
Marshall pushed away the remaining food. "Yep. Let's go."
- Fragments are fine with some exclamations and interjections.

Oh, no! My pet boa constrictor just crawled into bed with Grandma!
Absolutely not! You may not spray paint your sister's hair purple, and don't ask me again.



ROAD SIGNS: PUNCTUATION

Some people feel that punctuation rules limit their creative freedom, while others see it as just the opposite. The rules don't stifle creativity—they set it free! They allow you to tell your story or express your thoughts clearly, creatively, and persuasively. Let's look at an example. Which of these do you think is more creative?

THIS ONE:

The last time, I was at the beach, I saw a gaw-jus—and, ooooooh do I mean gaw-jus!!—sunset. The shimmmmmm-mering colors of: aquamarines . . . peach . . . and . . . hmmmm . . . oh, I guess I'd call it lavender . . . danced together on the White Caps—beautifully. Watching Nature's "artistry" made my ♥ : quietly—yep, it did.

OR THIS ONE:

The last time I was at the beach I saw a gorgeous sunset. The shimmering colors of aquamarine, peach, and lavender danced together on the white caps in a beautiful way. Watching nature's artistry made my heart smile quietly.

Can you feel when reading the first example what it's like to stumble as a reader? You might wrinkle your brow for a second wondering what on earth gaw-jus means, or why all the . . . ellipses? In the second example, notice that you don't notice the punctuation or the grammar or the spelling. That's the secret of good grammar: *it disappears!* The mechanics of the sentence hide behind the scenes so that your story can shine. And your reader never stumbles.

Let's see how to use punctuation in a way that lets your stories sparkle and your creativity soar.

Periods

Use a period at the end of a complete sentence.

This rule is mighty easy.
I hope they are all this easy.

Use periods (decimal points) with money and percentages.

\$12.56 24.6%

Use periods after initials in people's names.

My algebra teacher's name is Mr. Al G. Brough.