

Sentence Fragments

A sentence fragment is a group of words that does not express a complete thought; it has an essential sentence part missing (subject, verb, or object). Two common types of sentence fragments are phrase fragments and subordinate clause fragments.

Phrase fragments

A phrase is a group of words acting as a single part of speech and not containing a verb and its subject. When a phrase is allowed to stand alone, it is referred to as a fragment.

There are several types of phrases commonly made into fragments:

| Phrase | Example |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Infinitive phrase | To increase speed |
| Absolute phrase | It being Sunday |
| Participial phrase | Hoping for a job |
| Gerund phrase | Finding a needle in a haystack |
| Appositive phrase | Slim and none |
| Prepositional phrase | After much discussion |

Subordinate, or dependent clause fragments

The subordinate clause is often introduced by a relative pronoun (who, whom, whose, which, that, what) or a subordinating conjunction (if, when, while, although, because, et al). If a clause beginning with one of these words is allowed to stand alone, the result is an incomplete thought.

Common Subordinating Conjunctions

| | | | |
|------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| after | as though | provided that | unless |
| although | because | since | until |
| as | before | so that | when |
| as if | if | than | whenever |
| as long as | in order that | though | where |
| | | | whereas |
| | | | wherever |
| | | | whether |
| | | | while |

Here are three steps you can take to prevent sentence fragments:

1. Look to see that the sentence has a subject and a verb.
2. Look at how the group of words functions. If it functions as a noun or a modifier, rather than a complete thought, it is a fragment.
3. Look to see if the sentence begins with a relative pronoun or a subordinating conjunction. If so, is it a complete thought?

By keeping these tips in mind, you ought to be able to prevent yourself from writing sentence fragments.

There are two ways that you can repair sentence fragments:

1. Pull the fragment into the nearby sentence from which it has become detached.
2. Turn the fragment into a new sentence.

Exception: Fragments may be used for special purposes:

For Emphasis

To Answer A Question

As A Transition

Exclamations

In Advertising