

Correcting Sentence Fragments

A sentence fragment is a word group that is capitalized and punctuated as a sentence, but is not a sentence. A sentence needs at least one **independent clause** which contains a **subject** and a **verb**, and expresses a complete thought. A **subject** is the spotlight of a sentence (what the sentence is about), and a **verb** describes an action, occurrence, or state (what the subject does).

Incorrect: Studying the rules in his driver's manual.

Correct: Studying the rules in his driver's manual, he realized he wasn't ready for the test.

There are different types of **sentence fragments**. One type contains a subject and verb, but begins with a **subordinating word** (in the examples below, *because, after,*), making it a **dependent clause**, not a sentence. Word groups like this need additional information to become complete sentences.

Incorrect:

- *Because she became president of the club*
- *After the movie ends*

The word groups above do not explain what happens under the described condition. To revise these fragments, we need to add the missing information:

Correct:

- *Because she became president of the club, it attracted more members.*
- *I would like to get something to eat after the movie ends.*

Subordinating words explain how two phrases relate to one another, using words such as: *when, since, although, as, before, even though, if, rather than, when, which, and while*. As you can see from the *correct* examples, it is also possible for a **subordinating word** and **dependent clause** to occur later in the sentence (as in the second example).

Another **type of sentence fragment** contains a verb form such as a present participle (-ing verb form) that cannot function as the main verb of a sentence.

Incorrect:

- *Craig being the most talented person on his hockey team.*
- *Running a mile or two before breakfast.*

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Continued...

In the first case, the verb form needs to be changed to correct the sentence. In the second case, more information needs to be added (who is running?)

Correct:

- *Craig is the most talented person on his hockey team.*
- *Joaquin can be seen on the track every morning, running a mile or two before breakfast.*

Another way to correct the first example is to keep the verb form *being*, and add missing information. Example two can be corrected differently as well, changing the fragment into a complete sentence.

Correct:

- *Craig being the most talented person on his hockey team, was drafted by the NHL.*
- *Joaquin can be seen on the track every morning. He runs a mile or two before breakfast.*

A third **type of sentence fragment** is a word group with no verb:

Incorrect:

- *For example, the introduction of laptops in the classroom.*

Correct:

- *For example, the introduction of laptops in the classroom has been successful.*

So when looking for sentence fragments, make sure your sentence has a

- ✓ Subject
- ✓ Main verb
- ✓ Makes a Complete idea

But before changing anything within the fragment, check to see if attaching the fragment to the sentence before, or after it will solve the problem.