

Sentence Fragments and Run-On Sentences

Sentences must express a complete thought meaning that they must have a subject and a verb. 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).

Sentence fragments are known as fragments because they only express a part of a thought; they do not express a complete thought, and they are not independent of other information. Sometimes sentence fragments lack either a subject or a verb.

However, the types of sentence fragments that writers tend to find the most challenging are **dependent clauses**. A dependent clause has a subject and a verb, but needs additional information for the word group to become a complete sentence.

Here are some examples of sentence fragments:

- Because she became president of the club
- After the movie ends
- When I finally travel to South Africa
- Since he bribed the official

Each of the above fragments contains a subject and a verb, but is missing important information. The word groups above do not explain what happens under the described condition. To revise these fragments, we simply need to add the missing information:

- *Because* she became president of the club, it attracted more members.
- I would like to get something to eat *after* the movie ends.
- I want to visit Cape Town *when* I finally travel to South Africa.
- *Since* he bribed an official, he is going to go to prison.

As you might have noticed, each of the above sentences contains a subordinating conjunction (*because, after, when, since*). **Subordinating conjunctions** explain how two phrases relate to one another, using words such as: *although, as, before, even though, if, rather than, when, which, and while*. If a subordinating conjunction appears at the beginning of a sentence, it is necessary to insert a comma after it. However, it is also possible for a subordinating conjunction and dependent clause to occur later in the sentence (as in the second and third examples).

Run-on sentences include more than one complete thought without an indication of the break between them. Run-on sentences, like comma splices and fused sentences, are not punctuated correctly.

Here is an example of a run-on sentence: My favorite sport is soccer it is very dangerous.

You have several options for revising run-on sentences:

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet) to indicate the relationship between the complete thoughts.
My favorite sport is soccer, but it is very dangerous.
2. Use a semicolon (;) to join the thoughts.
My favorite sport is soccer; it is very dangerous.
3. Use a period and capitalization to show where one thought ends and the other begins.
My favorite sport is soccer. It is very dangerous.