

Sentence Fragments

Defined:

- In English grammar, a sentence **MUST** contain a subject and a verb.
- A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence which is missing a subject, verb, or is not a complete thought (because of the use of dependent words or subordination).

Eg. *Even though my mom told me there was food at home.* The fridge was empty!
This sentence is a fragment. While it contains a subject [my mom] and verb [told] it is an incomplete thought on its own, and it needs the independent clause that follows to complete the thought.

**There are four types of sentence fragments:
dependent-word, ing and to, added-detail, & missing-subject**

Dependent-Word Fragments:

Dependent clauses/phrases are not complete sentences on their own. They are a phrase which depends on another statement to complete its thought and generally begins with one of the following:

after	even though	so that	whatever	which
although	ever since	than	when	whichever
as	how	that	whenever	while
as if	if	though	where	who
because	in order that	unless	whereas	whom
before	since	until	wherever	whose
even if	so (that)	what	whether	why

How to Correct a Dependent-Word Fragment:

Attach the sentence before or after the dependent-word fragment using a comma.

Fragment >> *Even though my mom told me there was food at home. The fridge was completely empty!*

The use of the dependent word/phrase [even though] at the beginning of the first sentence, has created a dependent clause. Dependent clauses cannot stand on their own, and need to be completed by an independent clause (complete thought).

Because the first sentence ends without a proper conclusion, the reader is left with the question about what happened next: Even though your mom told you there was food at home, what did you find?

Correct: *Even though my mom told me there was food at home, the fridge was completely empty!*

This sentence is now correct, as it has been connected to the independent clause that follows after, which completes the thought/idea.

Note: This does not create a comma splice/run-on sentence, because the comma is connecting a dependent clause to an independent clause, not two independent clauses (or two complete/standalone thoughts).

-ing & to Fragments:

When an **-ing verb** or **to + verb** appears at the start of a phrase without a noun, a fragment may occur because of a missing subject. The writer has attempted to replace the subject with a verb (action), leaving the reader questioning who is *doing* the action.

How to Correct an -ing Fragment (option one):

Attach the fragment to the phrase before it or after it using a conjunction or a comma.

Fragment: *Bob the builder was building a castle for his wife. Trying to impress her.*

^^ Fragment

Correct: *Bob the builder was building a castle for his wife, trying to impress her.*

In the sentence to the left, the fragmented sentence contains only an action, and does not contain a clear subject. While the intended subject is likely the same subject mentioned in the previous sentence, a sentence without a SUBJECT AND a VERB is a fragment.

How to Correct an -ing Fragment (option two):

By adding a comma between the fragmented clause and the independent clause, the subject [Bob] can now be connected to all verbs/actions that follow.

Add a subject and change the -ing verb to the true form of the verb.

Fragment:

We were eating at the Keg. *Not expecting anything too crazy, but the steak was astounding!*

Fragment >>

Only an action, no clear subject present.

true/
root
form
>>

Correct:

+ subject

We were eating at the Keg. **We did not expect** anything too crazy, but the steak was astounding!

By adding a subject into the sentence, it is now clear to the reader who is doing the action. -ing verbs often suggest two things are happening at the same time. By changing the verb from the progressive (-ing) form to its true/root form, the action is complete on its own, and can stand alone in its own sentence.

How to Correct a to Fragment:

When to is at the start of a word group a fragment appears; this can be corrected by adding it to the previous sentence.

Fragment:

At the movie theatre, I arrive one hour early. *To secure my spot in the front row. I really had a fun time.*

Fragment >>

Only an action, no clear subject present.

Correct:

At the movie theatre, I arrived one hour early **to** secure my spot in the front row. I really had a fun time.

To verbs are often a continuation of another action in the main/independent clause in a sentence. By removing the period from the sentence before and attaching the fragmented clause without a comma, the to verb acts as a continuation of the main action in the sentence or provides more detail/context about why or how the main action is occurring.

Why did the person arrive one hour early? The person arrived one hour early **TO SECURE** their spot in the front row.

Added-Detail Fragments:

The purpose of added details is to provide elaboration or examples to extend the reader's understanding. These details are not needed to complete the sentence, but cannot stand on their own. Added-detail fragments are typically missing a subject or verb and often begin with:

also especially	like such as	for example including	except excluding
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How to Correct an Added-Detail Fragment:

Attach or insert the fragment to the sentence before using a conjunction, transition word and/or a comma.

Fragment:

Jamal likes working at Rogers Arena. *He enjoys the benefits. Such as meeting the Canucks players.*

Fragment >>

Correct:

Jamal likes working at Rogers Arena. He enjoys the benefits, **such as** meeting the Canucks players.

The information contained in the fragment is simply additional details or examples that elaborate on the previous sentence. In this case, the fragment is providing examples of benefits that Jamal enjoys. This is a continuation of the same idea, and therefore should be connected. A comma is used because these details are not essential, are contained in a dependent clause, and therefore can be separated from the main clause.

Missing-Subject Fragments:

A missing subject fragment is just a sentence that doesn't have a subject. Therefore, it cannot be an independent sentence (which must contain a subject + verb).

How to Correct a Missing Subject Fragment:

Combine the fragment and the sentence before or after using a conjunction, transition and/or a comma.

Fragment:

Steve loved to eat candy. *But detested eating his vegetables.*

Fragment >>

Correct:

Steve loved to eat candy **but** detested eating his vegetables.

By connecting the two clauses, the subject [Steve] is connected to both actions [loved and detested].

How to Correct a Missing Subject Fragment:

Complete the sentence by adding a subject (often a pronoun).

Fragment:

First, I woke up and took a shower. *Then ate breakfast with my family.*

Fragment >>

Correct:

First, I woke up and took a shower. **Then I ate** breakfast with my family.

By adding a subject into the fragmented clause, it is clear to the reader who is doing the action and the sentence is complete.

Sentence Fragments Review

A. IDENTIFY THE TYPE OF FRAGMENT (**dependent**, **ing**, **to**, **added-detail**, **missing subject**)

B. CORRECT THE SENTENCE FRAGMENT

- Added Detail Fragment -- created by the added detail transition "such as" the fragment is providing specific examples of the "beauty" in the scene.
1. The scene was filled with beauty. **Such as the sun sending its brilliant rays to the Earth and the leaves of various shades of red, yellow, and brown moving slowly in the wind.**
The scene was filled with beauty, such as the sun sending its brilliant rays to the Earth, and the leaves of various shades of red, yellow, and brown moving slowly in the wind.
added-detail
- Dependent Word Fragment -- created by the dependent word "because" the fragment is providing a reason for why the subject in the previous sentence switched programs; the two ideas should be connected as the first sentence (an independent clause) completes the fragment
2. Jeremy has switched programs. **Because he has decided to become an electrical engineer.**
Jeremy has switched programs because he has decided to become an electrical engineer.
dependent-word
- ing Fragment -- created by the -ing verb "being" the fragment contains an -ing verb which usually suggests another action is occurring at the same time; the -ing verb at the beginning should be changed to its true form [was] so the idea can stand on its own.
3. I called to cancel my train ride home. **:† being the day before my psychology midterm.** I knew my parents would understand.
I called to cancel my train ride home. It was the day before my psychology midterm. I knew my parents would understand.
-ing fragment (missing subject)
- Added-Detail Fragment -- created by "especially" the fragment is providing an example of the type of mistakes found when proofreading, and it should be connected to the sentence before
4. Proofreading essays for spelling mistakes is a tedious task. **Especially when the writing has a lot of errors in homonyms.**
Proofreading essays for spelling mistakes is a tedious task, especially when the writing has a lot of errors in homonyms.
added-detail
- To Fragment -- created by the to verb "to prepare" the fragment should be connected to the sentence before as a continuation of the action of "studying"
5. Werner often procrastinates when he should be studying. **To prepare for final exams.**
Werner often procrastinates when he should be studying to prepare for final exams.
to fragment (missing subject)
- Dependent Fragment -- created by the word "after" the fragment should be connected to the sentence before to complete the thought.
6. I treated myself to dinner. **After I cashed my paycheck.**
I treated myself to dinner after I cashed my paycheck.
dependent-word
- ing Fragment -- created by the word "trying" This should be added with a comma to the sentence before as an additional action that the subject "Ellen" is doing.
7. Ellen walked all over the neighbourhood yesterday. **Trying to find her dog Fido.** Several people claimed they had seen him only hours before.
Ellen walked all over the neighbourhood yesterday, trying to find her dog Fido. Several people claimed they had seen him only hours before.
-ing fragment (missing subject)
- Dependent Word Fragments created by "when" and "that" Both need to be connected to the main/independent clause.
8. **When I graduate.** I will get a job. **That may not exist today.**
When I graduate, I will get a job that may not exist today.
dependent added-detail/dependent/missing subject
9. **Since Kim was not read to as a child.** She has a difficult time keeping up with her course readings. As a result, she has vowed to read every day to her own children.
Dependent Word Fragment created by "since." The fragment needs to be connected to an independent clause that completes the idea.

Since Kim was not read to as a child, **she** has a difficult time keeping up with her course readings. As a result, she has vowed to read every day to her own children.
dependent-word

Dependent Word Fragment created by "because"

This needs to be connected to an independent clause that completes the idea.

10. Many students enjoy group-work activities. **Because the time goes by faster.** **More active learning also takes place.**

Many students enjoy group-work activities because the time goes by faster **and more active learning also takes place.**

dependent; added-detail

This can be seen as an added-detail fragment because of the word "also." Despite it including a subject and verb, it is ultimately providing a second example of why students may enjoy group-work activities.