

Sentence Fragments

A fragment is an incomplete sentence that often occurs for one of two reasons:
(1) dependent (subordinate) clauses that have been separated from the rest of the sentence or
(2) main clauses or phrases lacking subjects or main verbs. Sentence fragments do not express a complete thought to the reader. In most cases of sentence fragments, revision involves connecting the fragment to a complete sentence and changing the punctuation or supplying the missing subject or verb.

Examples and Application

No Subject: *Standing in line at the grocery.*

No Verb: *Eager voters.*

Subordinate Clause: *Until a tutor arrived.*

Fragments can be challenging to identify when phrased conversationally or when following a complete sentence in context, as in the following examples:

Sue recognized the professor from Stanford and the appeals court judge. From last night's debate panel at the conference. (subordinate clause separated from sentence)

The architect completed drawings for the main floor of the house. Living areas like the great room, dining room, and kitchen. (no verb)

Notice how the fragment is corrected by connecting it to a complete sentence or by revising the fragment with the missing verb or subject.

1. Incorrect: *Liberty offers many different degrees. Such as youth ministry, psychology, music, and mathematics.* (subordinate clause)
Revision: *Liberty offers many different degrees such as youth ministry, psychology, music and mathematics.*
2. Incorrect: *Grocery bags tossed all over the kitchen floor.* (no verb)
Revision: *Grocery bags were tossed all over the kitchen floor.*

Practice

Revise the following sentence fragments to form complete sentences.

1. The car would not start. Because of the battery, the transmission, or the spark plug.
2. In addition to ending class early. The teacher did not give a quiz.
3. Music down the hallway.
4. Never saw anything like this in history.
5. Until they make the decision to allow their hearts to be changed by God.

Suggested Revisions: 1. Due to either the battery, transmission, or spark plugs, the car would not start. 2. In addition to ending class early, the teacher did not give a quiz. 3. Music reverberated all the way down the hallway. 4. The peaceful demonstrators never saw anything like this in history. 5. People's thoughts and actions will not change until they make the decision to allow their hearts to be changed by God.