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Sentence Fragments

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We also have more information about sentences and general writing concerns.

Fragments are incomplete sentences. Usually, fragments are pieces of sentences that have become disconnected from the main clause. One of the easiest ways to correct them is to remove the period between the fragment and the main clause. Other kinds of punctuation may be needed for the newly combined sentence.

Below are some examples with the fragments shown in red. Punctuation and/or words added to make corrections are highlighted in blue. Notice that the fragment is frequently a dependent clause or long phrase that follows the main clause.

Fragment (phrase or dependent clause)	Possible Revision
Purdue offers many majors in engineering. Such as electrical, chemical, and industrial engineering.	Purdue offers many majors in engineering, such as electrical, chemical, and industrial engineering.
Coach Dietz exemplified this behavior by walking off the field in the middle of a game. Leaving her team at a time when we needed her.	Coach Dietz exemplified this behavior by walking off the field in the middle of a game, leaving her team at a time when we needed her.
I need to find a new roommate. Because the one I have now isn't working out too well.	I need to find a new roommate because the one I have now isn't working out too well.
The current city policy on	

housing is incomplete as it stands. Which is why we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.

Because the current city policy on housing is incomplete as it stands, we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.

You may have noticed that newspaper and magazine journalists often use a dependent clause as a separate sentence when it follows clearly from the preceding main clause, as in the last example above. This is a conventional **journalistic** practice, often used for emphasis. For **academic** writing and other more formal writing situations, however, you should avoid such journalistic fragment sentences.



Some fragments are not clearly pieces of sentences that have been left unattached to the main clause; they are written as main clauses but lack a subject or main verb.

Fragment (incomplete main clause)	Possible Revisions
<p><i>No main verb</i> A story with deep thoughts and emotions.</p>	<p><i>Appositive:</i> Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," a story with deep thoughts and emotions, has impressed critics for decades.</p> <p><i>Direct object:</i> She told a story with deep thoughts and emotions.</p>
<p>Toys of all kinds thrown everywhere.</p>	<p><i>Complete verb:</i> Toys of all kinds were thrown everywhere.</p> <p><i>Direct object:</i> They found toys of all kinds thrown everywhere.</p>
<p>A record of accomplishment beginning when you were first hired.</p>	<p><i>Direct object:</i> I've noticed a record of accomplishment beginning when you were first hired.</p> <p><i>Main verb:</i> A record of accomplishment began when you were first hired.</p>
<p><i>No subject</i> With the ultimate effect of all</p>	<p><i>Remove preposition:</i> The ultimate effect of all</p>

advertising is to sell the product.	advertising is to sell the product.
By paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.	<i>Remove preposition:</i> Paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.
For doing freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired.	<i>Remove preposition:</i> Doing freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired. <i>Rearrange:</i> Phil got fired for doing freelance work for a competitor.

These last three examples of fragments with no subjects are also known as *mixed constructions*, that is, sentences constructed out of mixed parts. They start one way (often with a long prepositional phrase) but end with a regular predicate. Usually the object of the preposition (often a gerund, as in the last two examples) is intended as the subject of the sentence, so removing the preposition at the beginning is usually the easiest way to edit such errors.

Please refer to our [fragment exercises](#) for editing practice.

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