**Five Ways to Correct**

**Sentence Fragments**

****The Writing & Learning Studio Room 4301 Shoreline Community College

1. **Look for words that start dependent clauses.**

A group of words having a subject and verb is a **clause**. A clause is ***independent*** (able to stand alone expressing a complete idea) or **dependent** (does not express a complete idea by itself). A **dependent** **clause** has a subject and a clause, but it cannot stand alone and make sense. It begins with a dependent word (or words) such as these:

after

although

as

as if

because

before

even if

even though

ever since

how

if

in order to

since

so that

than

that

unless

until

what

whatever

when

whenever

where

whereas

wherever

whether

which

whichever

while

who

whom

whose

why

Whenever a clause begins with one of these dependent words, it is a dependent clause.

For example, if we can take an independent clause such as

*We are learning about sentence fragments.*

and put one of the dependent words in front of it, becomes a dependent clause:

***Although*** *we are learning about sentence fragments,*

***Because*** *we are learning about sentence fragments,*

***Even though*** *we are learning about sentence fragments,*

***While*** *we are learning about sentence fragments,*

As you probably noticed, these clauses **do not make a complete statement**. The reader expects more. Thus, **they cannot stand alone**. They are **fragments** and should not be punctuated as sentences.

1. **To turn a fragment into a complete sentence,** **add an independent clause to the dependent clause.**

*Although we are learning about sentence fragments,* ***several other topics must be studied, too.***

*Because we are learning about sentence fragments,* ***we may become better writers.***

*Even though we are learning about sentence fragments,* ***I’m still worried that I’ll make mistakes.***

*While we are learning about sentence fragments,* ***we can take notes to study later.***

Remember: **Every sentence must have at least one INDEPENDENT clause!**

**Note:** When a ***dependent* clause** comes **at the beginning** of a sentence, it is **followed by a coma.**

Often the comma prevents misreading, as in the following:

*When he entered, the closet door was open.*

Without a comma after *entered,* the reader would read: *“When he entered the closet”* before realizing that wasn’t what the author meant. The comma prevents misreading. Sometimes, if the dependent clause is short enough, there is no danger of misreading if the comma is omitted, but it’s safer simply to follow the rule that **a comma follows a dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence.**

**Note:** Sometimes, the dependent clause appears in the middle of the independent clause:

*The road that was finished last month goes to Chicago.*

**Note:** Sometimes the dependent clause is the subject matter of the entire sentence:

*What we are learning about sentence fragments is important.* (No comma is needed after the dependent clause because it flows right into the rest of the sentence.)

**Note:** Sometimes the “that” of the dependent clause is omitted:

*This is the house that Jane built.*  **OR** *This is the house Jane built.*

*I thought that you were coming along.* **OR**  *I thought you were coming along.*

The word “that” does not always introduce a dependent clause. It may serve as a pronoun

*(That is my cat.)* or a describing word *(I love that frog).*

**PRACTICE:** **Experimenting with putting the dependent clause BEFORE the independent clause and vice versa:**

**Fragment:** As he ran to catch the bus

Correct: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Fragment:** When he finally reached it

Correct: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Fragment:** After I finally decide where to live

Correct: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Fragment:** Because I had so much laundry to do

Correct:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Fragment:** If I won the lottery

Correct: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Fragment:** Although she was laughing

Correct: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Any group of words that doesn’t have a subject and a verb is a fragment.**

* ***Took an interest in architecture (no subject)***
* ***Tom washing his car*** (no adequate verb) Although *-ing* words look like verbs, no *-ing* word

by itself can ever be the verb of a sentence. It must have a helping verb in front of it.

* ***Thinking about his birthday*** (no subject and no adequate verb)

**You can change the fragments above into sentences by adding a subject and an adequate verb:**

* ***He*** *took an interest in architecture* (added a subject)
* *****Tom* ***was*** *washing his car*. (added a helping verb)
* ***She was*** *thinking about his birthday.* (added a subject and a helping verb)

1. **Sometimes you can simply add a fragment to the beginning or the ending of the sentence.**

**Incorrect:** ***Wondering why he hadn’t come****. I finally texted him.*

****Correct: *Wondering why he hadn’t come,* ***I finally texted him.***

Correct:***I finally texted him,*** *wondering why he hadn’t come.*

1. **Or you can change a word or two in the fragment to make it into a sentence.**

**Incorrect:** ***Wondering why he hadn’t come*.**

Correct: *Micky wondered why he hadn’t come.*