**Fragments, Run-ons, Comma Splices & Dependent Words**

The Writing & Learning Studio Room 4301 Shoreline Community College rev: 2-7-20

(Some of the definitions and examples in this handout for fragments and comma splices are adapted from *The DELUXE TRANSITIVE VAMPIRE, The Ultimate Handbook of Grammar for the Innocent, the Eager and the Doomed,* by Karen Elizabeth Gordon.)

**FRAGMENTS**

**Fragments are subordinate (dependent) clauses or phrases that don’t express a complete thought.**

**To fix them, you might be able to add a verb or subject, or to delete a dependent word such as *who, which, that, after, although, because, even though, if, since, until, when, where, while*.**

(**NOTE:** To learn more about **dependent words**, see the back of this page.)

**Fragment:** An emerald shade of green which caught her eye.

Sentence: An emerald shade of green caught her eye.

**Fragment:** Tripping over the torn linoleum. She was floored.

Sentence: Tripping over the torn linoleum, she was floored.

**Fragment:** The band never arrived. The result being that they upset a concert hall of excitable fans

Sentences: The band never arrived, with the result being that they upset a concert hall of excitable fans.

The band never arrived, which upset a concert hall full of excitable fans.

By never arriving, the band upset a concert hall of excitable fans.

**RUN-ONS**

**Run-on sentences are “sentences” that combine at least two independent clauses without using appropriate connecting words and/or punctuation between them.**

***Run-on:*** Her poise and sophistication are intimidating they bring out the insecurity in me.

Sentence: Her poise and sophistication are intimidating; they bring out the insecurity in me.

***Run-on:*** He longs to visit distant countries, for instance, he’d like to go where his grandfather was born.

Sentence: He longs to visit distant countries, such as the one where his grandfather was born.

Among the distant countries he longs to visit is the one where his grandfather was born.

***Run-on:*** The electrician snipped the wrong wire it zapped him.

Sentence: The electrician snipped the wrong wire, and it zapped him.

Snipping the wrong wire, the electrician was zapped.

**COMMA SPLICES**

**Comma splices are run-on sentences created by using a comma instead of a conjunction, semi-colon, or period to separate two independent clauses.**

***Splice*:** One type of student studies just enough to get by, another type devotes nearly every

free minute to studying.

Sentence: One type of student studies just enough to get by; another type devotes nearly every

free minute to studying.

***Splice*:** She wrapped herself up in a blanket, there was no other way to keep warm.

Sentence: She wrapped herself up in a blanket because there was no other way to keep warm.

***Splice*:** Their relatives never failed to arrive without wine and chocolates, therefore, they were

always welcome at family gatherings.

Sentence: Their relatives never failed to arrive without wine and chocolate; therefore, they were

always welcome at family gatherings.

**DEPENDENT WORDS (also called subordinating words)**

**Rule 1:** To be a **DEPENDENT WORD (DW),** the word **MUST** be followed by an **S-V group** (**S**ubject-**V**erb).

**Rule 2:** An S-V group starting with a DW is called a **DEPENDENT CLAUSE (DC).**

**Rule 3:** If a sentence **starts with a DC**, a **comma** should follow the DC.

**Rule 4:** A DC cannot stand alone. A DC by itself is called a sentence **FRAGMENT**. For a sentence to be complete,

an ***independent*** clause (IC) must come either **before or after** a DC.

after in order that whenever

although just as where\*\*

as like (= same as) whereas

as if, as though once (= as soon as) wherever

because since whether

before so that (= in order that) which\*

even if, even though than (**not** “then”) whichever\*

ever since that\* while

every time though (but **not** if it means “however”) who\*\*\*

everywhere unless whoever\*\*\*

how\*\* until whom\*

if what\*\*\* whomever\*

inasmuch as whatever whose\*\*\*

when why\*\*

\* These are special dependent words called **relative pronouns.**

\*\* In questions these might NOT be DW’s: Who did it? Whose is it?

\*\*\* Both of the above (\* & \*\*)

**NOTE:**  It makes a BIG DIFFERENCE which DW you use.

**Examples:**  She exercised **although** she was tired. (She did it anyway, even though she was tired.)

She exercised **because** she was tired. (She did it because she thought it would help.)

**NOTE:** It makes a SUBTLE DIFFERENCE where you choose to put your DC: The DC at the beginning can give the idea that it is the more important idea than the IC.

**Examples:** Because she was tired, she exercised. (emphasizes her tiredness)

She exercised because she was tired. (emphasizes her exercising)

**NOT** DEPENDENT WORDS (These words are **ADVERBS** or **ADVERBIAL CONJUNCTIONS**)

besides (when it means “also”) in fact then

consequently indeed therefore

furthermore moreover though

hence nevertheless though (when it means “however”)

however (when it means “but”) subsequently thus