

How to Fix Sentence Fragments

..... a practical handout

What is a sentence fragment?

A sentence fragment is a sentence that does not have a subject or a verb (action word) and or is not a complete thought/idea.

A sentence fragment includes one or all of the following:

A Dependent Clause

Example: *“Because she was there.”*

A Phrase

Example: *“Cats on the table.”*

A Word

Example: *“There.”*

Basics to Review

First, a complete sentence must have a main clause, which is made of 2 elements:

1) A subject

Example: *Cat*

2) A verb (an action)

Example: *jumped*

Once you have these two elements, then you can add other elements such as articles (a, an, the) , prepositional phrases, or another main clause.

Ex: The **cat jumped** on the windowsill.

(Main clause) (Prepositional phrase)

Ex: The **dog barked** and the **cat jumped** on the man’s head.

(1st Main clause) (2nd Main clause) (Prepositional phrase)

In order to identify the main clause of a sentence, you can ask yourself these questions:

1. What is the subject?
2. What is the verb?

Ex: One day, the pirate decided to retire from sailing the high seas.

1. What is the subject? **The pirate**
2. What is the verb? **Decided**

Main Clause = The Pirate decided

Identifying Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences for multiple reasons.

1. Sentence fragments might not have a subject, a verb, or even both (main clause)

Examples:

The cookies gone.

This sentence has a subject, but it is a fragment because it does not have a verb.

Jumped into the pool.

Who jumped into the pool? We do not know because the subject is missing.

2. Sentence fragments might be dependent clauses*.

*A dependent clause does have a subject and verb, but they are fragments because they do not make a complete thought.

Example:

When we go to the store.

After you get up from your bed.

Since we want to go to the museum.

Methods of Fixing Sentence Fragments

Once you identify a sentence fragment, the next step is to fix it. There are three methods that can help you transform a sentence fragment into a complete sentence: unify, add, or rewrite. Depending on the need or your preference, you can choose one or more of the following methods.

Method	Definition	Examples
Unify	Add the fragment to the previous or following sentence	<p>Fragment: <i>The cookies gone. The professors ate all of them.</i></p> <p>Unify: <i>The cookies are gone because the professors ate all of them.</i></p>
Add	Add whatever is missing: subject, verb, or complete thought	<p>Fragment: <i>Writing a summary showing your understanding of the story.</i></p> <p>Add: <i>Writing a summary is showing your understanding of the story.</i></p>
Rewrite	Rewrite the fragment/s or the whole passage	<p>Fragment: <i>The night was cold and the people of the house trembling with fear. There was never a night this cold until now. Everything cold. Everything dim. Tears rolling down their faces.</i></p> <p>Rewrite: <i>The night was cold and the people of the house were trembling with fear. There was never a night this cold until now. Everything was cold and dim. Tears were rolling down their faces.</i></p>

References

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