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.”

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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**

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### 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.*
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.

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| **Unify** | Add the fragment to the previous or following sentence | **Fragment:**
The cookies gone. The professors ate all of them.  
**Unify:**
The cookies are gone because the professors ate all of them. |
| **Add** | Add whatever is missing: subject, verb, or complete thought | **Fragment:**
Writing a summary showing your understanding of the story.  
**Add:**
Writing a summary is showing your understanding of the story. |
| **Rewrite** | Rewrite the fragment/s or the whole passage | **Fragment:**
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.  
**Rewrite:**
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. |

References