University of 08 Mai 1945

Department of English Written Expression

First Year Groups : 1,4,and 5

**Common Sentence Errors: Run-on Sentences and Fragments**

Once you understand what a sentence is, you ‘ll be able to tell what works and what doesn’t work. To avoid errors like run-on sentences and fragments, you should learn to recognize how complete sentences put together. Other errors, such as lack of subject-predicate agreement, misplaced modifiers, faulty parallelism, and style problems like wordiness, require careful attention to the way words function within a sentence. These problems with sentence construction confuse your readers and obscure your meaning. Their use will also result in clumsy, unpolished writing and speech. Let’s look at each of these sentences errors in detail so that you’ll be able to fix them with ease.

**Defintion of Run-on :** A run-on is two separate sentences incorrectly written as if they are one. A run-on sentence in which two or more independent clauses are written after another with no punctuation( fused sentences) or with incorrect punctuation ( comma splice). Beware of this sentence error in your own writing !

A run-on sentence is two or more sentences written as if they are one sentence.

1. I enjoy computer games they keep me entertained on rainy days.

Without punctuation to separate them.

1. The comma is present, but a comma is not strong enough to separate two complete sentences. E.g. He drove off in the Mercedes, Erica watched him go. (no)

He drove off in the Mercedes. Erica watched him go. (yes)

He drove off in the Mercedes, and Erica watched him go.( yes)

1. RUN-ON : The first moving pictures were in black and white and had no sound, today’s films have come a long way. Without a comma and conjuction and comma to connect them.

Activity : Rewrite the following run-on sentences.

1. That piano is beautiful, it has a beautiful sound, too.
2. Maria enjoys swimming her brother Raoul prefers sailing and fishing.
3. I do not like most television comedies, they are boring.
4. I would love to see that show, the tickets are so expensive, though.
5. In some places, there is no summer vacation can you imagine it ?
6. Video games require good cooridination, players must react quickly.

Run-on is when two or more sentences are combined without connecting words or punctuation.

E.g. Britney goes to summer school, she has to improve her math grade.

Complex sentence : Britney goes to summer school because she has to improve her math grade.

Activity2 : A. Correct the following run-ons by writing separate sentences.

1. Willis O’Brien made a life-sized bust of King Kong it was a fearsome sight.
2. The huge model was built of wood, wire, cloth, and metal it was covered with 40 bearskins.
3. Audiences screamed as King Kong descended upon New York they believed he was real !

B. A second way to correct a run-on is to use a comma and a conjunction. Correct these run-ons by adding a comma and one of these conjunctions :and, or, for, but.

1. King Kong was mechanical modern modern monsters move by complex electronics.

2. Models contain sensors the technicians activate them by remote control.

3. The operators can make the model monster look sad they can make it look fierce.

**Joining sentences part2: follow up.**

**Acceptable run-ons**

Run-on sentences such as the ones described are basic errors. Occasionally joining independent clauses with only a comma may be

Acceptable for example, when the clauses are very short and have the

same form, when the tone is easy and conversational, or when you feel that the rhythm of your sentence calls for it.

*Live by the sword, die by the sword.* But be very careful about creating an intentional run-on. Have a good reasonto do so; don’t break such a basic sentence rule lightly.

**2/ Sentence Fragments**

Most **sentence fragments** are phrases, or subordinate clauses, or combinations of the two. Don’t ever let length be your guide, for a sentence can be two words *(He jumps)* and a fragment fifty.

**Recognizing fragments**

At first glance, a sentence fragment may look like a sentence because it begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. When you look more closely, however, you’ll see that the group of words is missing one or more of the three elements required to make it a sentence: a subject, a predicate, and a grammatically complete thought.

Unless you want to emphasize the close connection between clauses.(fragment)

This is a subordinate clause. It is missing an independent clause that would complete the thought.

Don’t use a semicolon unless you want to emphasize the close connection between clauses.(sentence)

When you write sentences beginning with subordinating conjunctions,

make sure that you have an independent clause following the subordinate clause.

**FRAGMENT TYPE 1: NO VERB**

**A group of words written without a verb is a fragment. This type of fragment isn't usually mistaken for a sentence, but it can happen.**

**When it does, the simplest way to correct the error is to add a verb.**

**NO VERB:** A small puppy running across the lawn.

(The word *running* by itself is not a verb. It needs a helping verb like *is* or *was*.

**COMPLETE SENTENCE**: A small puppy was running across the lawn.

**EXERCISE:** Follow the example above, and correct the following fragments.

1. The man in the blue velvet suit.

2. The convention center downtown.

**FRAGMENT TYPE 2: NO SUBJECT:** Usually, in order to express a thought completely, a sentence must contain a subject and a verb. Sometimes, however, it may contain only a verb. This particular type of sentence, called an imperative sentence, is used to express commands: for example, **"Stop!" The verb is *stop*; the subject is understood to be “you” because the speaker is commanding someone else to stop.**

**\* A group of words written without a subject is a fragment.**

***Example: Was driving the car over the speed limit.***

***The mistake can be corrected by simply adding a subject.***

***Correction: The police officer*** *was driving the car over the speed limit.*

\*Took the train from Boston to New Haven.

COMPLETE SENTENCE: He took the train from Boston to New Haven.

**EXERCISE:** Follow the above example, and correct the following fragments.

1. Felt embarrassed.

2. Knew the answer.

**FRAGMENT TYPE 3: -ING VERB WITH NO HELPING VERB**

A sentence containing an -ing verb without a helping verb (is, are, were, have been, will be, etc.) is a fragment.

***Example:*** *The patient struggling bravely against a terrible disease.*

This can easily be corrected by adding an appropriate helping verb.

***Correction:*** *The patient was struggling bravely against a terrible disease.*

**EXERCISE:** Follow the above example, and correct the following fragments.

1. The dancers circling the stage.

2. The jet flying overhead.

**FRAGMENT TYPE 4: INCOMPLETE THOUGHT**

A dependent clause (a group of words that contains a subject and a verb but does **not** express a complete thought) that is punctuated as a sentence is a fragment.

***Example:*** *That the children were very curious.*

When editing very quickly, you might see a subject and verb in this dependent clause and incorrectly label it a sentence. But if you read the clause carefully, you can hear that it is not a complete thought. The fragment leaves the reader hanging in mid-air, asking Who?

When? or Why?

**NOTE:** A dependent clause usually begins with a subordinate conjunction or a relative pronoun. The following words are some of the most common subordinate conjunctions and relative pronouns; you should be able to recognize most of them.

after since while

although so that who

as (as if) that whoever

because what whom

even though whatever which

how when unless

if where until

**There are two ways to correct a dependent-clause fragment:**

1. Because it is the subordinate conjunction that transforms the independent clause (simple sentence) into a dependent clause, removing the subordinate conjunction will leave you with a simple sentence.

***Fragment:*** *That the children were very curious.*

***Correction:*** *The children were very curious.*

2. Connect the dependent clause to an independent clause, and create a complex sentence.

***Fragment:*** *Although I have an email account.*

***Correction:*** *Although I have an email account, I rarely email my friends.*

**EXERCISE:** Follow the above examples as models, and correct the following fragments.

1. Because small cars get better gas mileage.

2. Although the passersby stopped at the scene of the accident

**Fragment 5 NO VERB, NO SUBJECT:** From my uncle in Dallas.

COMPLETE SENTENCE: I got a gift from my uncle in Dallas.

\*We saw the boys standing there. *Laughing and throwing cans all over*

*the front lawn.* (**fragment**)

A sentence here is followed by a fragment, a participial phrase that cannot stand alone. The problem could be solved if the period after *there* were changed to a comma.

He pointed at Mrs. Wolfe. *The woman who wore the hard hat and*

*the tool belt.* (fragment)

The pronoun *who* makes this a relative clause that can’t stand alone. It acts as an appositive identifying Mrs. Wolfe, and it should be joined to the main clause with a comma.

**Verbals as Fragments**

Some kinds of words also play two roles. A **verbal** is such a word.

A verbal is *like a verb* but is not a verb. As the name suggests, but

it also acts as another part of speech. There are three different kinds of verbals: participles, gerunds, and infinitives .

***Participles***

A participle acts as both a verb and an adjective.

We found Darcy *painting* a picture.

(*Painting* modifies *Darcy,* like an adjective, and takes an object, *picture,* like a verb.)

*Exhausted* by the heat, we all jumped into the pool.

(*Exhausted* modifies *we,* like an adjective, and in turn is modified by a

prepositional phrase, *by the heat,* like a verb.)

*Having pitched* a perfect game, Brian spoke to the reporters.

(*Having pitched* modifies *Brian,* like an adjective, and takes an object,

*game,* like a verb.)

A participle cannot make a complete sentence without a true verb.

**NOT** A **SENTENCE**: Khawla jumping up and down with her diploma.

**SENTENCE**: Khawla was jumping up and down with her diploma. (The helping verb *was* completes the verb.)

**SENTENCE**: Khawla jumped up and down with her diploma.

NOT A **SENTENCE**: Jaleel packing his gear for the rafting adventure.

**SENTENCE**: Jaleel packed his gear for the rafting adventure.

**SENTENCE**: Packing his gear for the rafting adventure, Jaleel

threw in a change of clothes.

**APPLICATION I**

Decide whether each group of words below is a sentence or a fragment. Write **C** in the blank if correct and write **Frag** if incorrect. Correct the fragments.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Before heading for home, the tired student had another cup of coffee.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Although obesity requires a person to modify the diet.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 3. After the hackers tried to disrupt the computer network.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 4. The beautiful girl with the red hair and the bright eyes.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 5. The teacher grading papers with a red pen.

**APPLICATION II**

Read the following paragraph carefully. Write **C** if it is a complete sentence and **Frag** if it is a fragment. Then correct all fragments.

Summer should be a time to enjoy, yet many people consider it a miserable season. Infants and toddlers playing all the time in the summer. They are bothered by the heat. Since their bodies haven't yet fully developed the ability to dissipate heat. Mothers find the situation frustrating because they cannot explain the causes to their babies and they cannot force their children to slow down. Apartment dwellers can't enjoy the summer either. Frequently, apartments lack cross-ventilation, so the hot air stays in the small, boxy rooms. Also, apartment dwellers don't own backyards, so they have no place to go on a fine summer day. Rather than just stepping out on to the lawn. They must plan a major trip to a park or beach for summertime fun.

**Practice 1.** Which of the following is a sentence fragment(not a complete sentence)?

**a.** The memo was distributed on Friday.

**b.** Although the managers and the support staff

had been called.

**c.** The company was being acquired by a large

corporation.

**d.** Be sure to attend the meeting.

**6.** Which of the following is a sentence fragment,

that is, NOT a complete sentence?

**a.** Hearing the thunder, the lifeguard ordered us

out of the water.

**b.** Turn off the lights.

**c.** Sunday afternoon spent reading and playing

computer games.

**d.** I was surprised to see that my neighbor had

written a letter to the editor.

**7.** Three of the following sentences are either runons

or comma splices. Which one is NOT a faulty

sentence?

**a.** The newspapers are supposed to be delivered

by 7:00, but I am usually finished before 6:45.

**b.** I called the delivery service this morning, they

told me the shipment would arrive on time.

**c.** Look in the closet you should find it there.

**d.** I was the first to sign the petition Harry was second.

**Placement of Modifiers**

Keep related parts of a sentence together to avoid the common mistake of a misplaced modifier. If it isn’t clear in a sentence exactly which term a modifier applies to, it is a **misplaced modifier**.

**Misplaced modifiers**

Any kind of modifier can be misplaced: an adjective, an adverb, a phrase or clause acting as an adjective or adverb. If you put a modifier in a place it doesn’t belong, you risk confusion, awkwardness.

**Words**

For example, the words *only, almost,* and *just* should be placed as closely as possible to the word described. The best place is right before the words they describe. The placement of the word affects the meaning of the sentence.

He saw *a truck in the driveway that was red and black.* (misplaced

modifier)

If red and black are the colors of the truck rather than the driveway, write the sentence so that this is clear.

He saw *a red and black truck* in the driveway.

In the following sentence, the placement of the modifier *by Friday* leaves

us with a question: Did we know by Friday, or would we call for a strike

by Friday?

We knew *by Friday* we would call for a strike. (unclear modifier)

To avoid any possible confusion, add *that. Or you can say we knew we would call for a strike by Friday.*

**Misplaced participial phrases**

Among the most common misplaced modifiers are participial phrases.

Beginning writers often overlook whether the subject of the participial

phrase is clear to the reader.

*Advancing across the desolate plains, the hot sun* burned the *pioneers.*

(misplaced modifier)

If not the sun but the pioneers are advancing, make this clear.

No matter how you decide to rewrite the sentence, you must make sure

the modifier is modifying the right word.

**Dangling Modifiers** Words, phrases, or clauses that begin a sentence and are set off by commas sometimes mistakenly modify the wrong

noun or pronoun. These are called *dangling modifiers.*

While cleaning up after dinner, the phone rang.

While I was cleaning up after dinner, the phone rang.

While cleaning up after dinner, I heard the phone ring.

The phone rang while I was cleaning up after dinner.

In the next sentence, the infinitive phrase *To win the election* is lacking a word to modify; it cannot modify *money.*

*To win the election, money* is essential. (dangling modifier)

Rewrite the sentence to add an appropriate subject.

*To win the election, a candidate needs money.*

**Practice**: **Correct the following misplaced and dangling modifiers.**

**1.** Boiled in oil, I like olives and pimentos.

**2.** While speeding along a country road, two deer

dashed across the road in front of our car.

3. We heard about the bank robbers who were

arrested on the evening news.

**Combining simple sentences**

If you have written a series of simple sentences, try alternate methods of combining them to vary the pacing of the paragraph.

Look at the following example.

Old-growth forests are disappearing. Citizens should take action. For

example, wood substitutes are becoming more available. People can

ask their contractors to use these substitutes.

These **simple sentences** can be combined to make compound and complex sentences.

Old-growth forests are disappearing, and citizens should take action.

For example, people can ask their contractors to use wood substitutes,

which are becoming more available.

Be sure when you combine simple sentences that you let meaning be your guide. **For example,** use a complex sentence if you want to make one idea subordinate to another and a compound sentence if you want to join ideas of equal weight. In the example above, the first two clauses are of equal weight: the forests are disappearing, and people should do something about it. In the second sentence, the main idea is that people should ask their contractors to use wood substitutes; the subordinate point is that these substitutes are becoming more available.

**Combining sentences using phrases**

You can combine short sentences by using phrases as well as clauses.

example. Scientists first identify the defective gene. Then they can create a screening test. Physicians can use this screening test to diagnose the condition early.

**BETTER** After identifying the defective gene, scientists can develop

a screening test to help physicians diagnose the condition

early.

Notice that in the second version the participial phrase ***After identifying*** *the defective gene* and the infinitive phrase *to help physicians diagnose the condition early,* turn three choppy sentences into one smooth one.

**Varying Word Order in Sentences**

Instead of beginning every sentence with the simple subject, try beginning with a modifier, an appositive, or the main verb. You can also try delaying completion of your main statement or interrupting sentences with parenthetical elements. Look at the following examples.

Begin with a single-word modifier.

***Suddenly***the wind rushed into the room.

INSTEAD OF The wind ***suddenly***rushed into the room.

Begin with a modifying phrase or clause.

*Unregulated and easily accessible*, the Internet is a powerful

force.

INSTEAD OF The Internet, *unregulated and easily accessible*, is a *p*owerful

force.

***In front of an audience****,* she was a star.

INSTEAD OF She was a star *in front of an audience.*

*When the manager told me what the apartment cost,* I

decided living at home with Mom and Dad wasn’t so

bad.

**INSTEAD OF** I decided living at home with Mom and Dad wasn’t so

bad *when the manager told me what the apartment cost.*

**Begin with an appositive**

***A frequently misdiagnosed condition****,* iron overload can

lead to serious diseases.

INSTEAD OF Iron overload, *a frequently misdiagnosed condition,* can lead to serious diseases

Insert an interruption—a surprise element—in a sentence; use parentheses or dashes.

My home town—*it is closer to being a junction than a town—*recently

acquired its first traffic light.

Never sacrifice meaning or clarity for variety, however. And remember that any technique you use for sentence variety will be self-defeating if you use it too often in a short piece of writing.