

Checking for Fragments:

Read each group of words that ends in a period. Pay special attention to the beginning words, such as the following:

- prepositions: (at, on, with, toward, etc.)
- dependent clause markers/subordinating conjunctions (when, if, since, because, although, etc.)
- —ing verbs (running, studying, listening, etc.)
- *to* before the verb [infinitives] (to understand, to hear, to see, etc.)
- examples or explanations (for example, such as, etc.)

Ask the following questions:

- Is there a subject? *If you answer, "No," you have a fragment.*
- Is there a verb? *If you answer, "No," you have a fragment.*
- Is there a complete thought? *If you answer, "No," you have a fragment.*

Look especially for word groups that begin with dependent (subordinate) words: ***Because I lost my wallet. I had to borrow money from my dad.*** If the **second thought** does not follow **within** the sentence, you have a fragment.

In other words, you can begin a sentence with ***because*** as long as you finish it with an independent clause.

Use the "I believe" test:

- You can place "I believe" in front of a complete sentence **but not** in front of a fragment: I believe the boy with the scooter lives next door. **BUT NOT** *I believe when the boy with the scooter lives next door.

Fixing Fragments:

- Add missing words (subject or verb)
- Attach fragment to the sentence before or after it.

Grammar without Tears: a Writing Center workshop

Grammar Terms

Comma Splice: the incorrect use of a comma to join 2 sentences or 2 independent clauses (*Angela answered the phone, she was the only person in the office*)

Complete Sentence: an independent clause that can be correctly punctuated with a ending punctuation mark, such as a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point. The opposite of a complete sentence is a fragment, which is only part of a sentence and which cannot be punctuated correctly with an ending punctuation mark.

Coordinating Conjunction: joins grammatical units of the same type (two independent clauses for example), creating a **compound sentence**. There are seven of these conjunctions which can be remembered with the acronym **FANBOYS**: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Dependent Clause: cannot be used as a complete sentence by itself, as opposed to an independent clause which can stand alone. There are 3 types of dependent clauses: 1—an adjective clause modifies a noun *I read the book that you recommended*; 2—an adverb clause modifies a verb *I was in the shower when the telephone rang*; and 3—a noun clause plays the role of subject or object *What you are asking is not possible*

Fragment: part of a sentence that is punctuated as if it were a complete sentence. Fragments are often pieces cut off from the preceding sentence; for example: *The computer lost my paper. X Which I had worked on all night.*

Fused sentence: a type of run-on sentence in which 2 complete sentences (independent clauses) are joined together with no punctuation. *My brother caught a cold he has been out of school for a week.* This is similar to a comma splice—see above.

Independent clause: (also called a main clause) can always stand alone as a complete sentence. Every sentence must contain at least one independent clause.

Run-on sentence: 2 or more sentences joined without adequate punctuation—both fused sentences and comma splices are run-ons.