

## Fragments

A sentence fragment is a group of words that cannot stand alone as a complete sentence but is punctuated as a complete sentence. Although it starts with a capital letter and ends with a period (or question mark), a fragment is not a sentence.

*The following text is from Prentice Hall Reference Guide, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. By Muriel Harris*

### **Fragments without a Subject or a Verb**

One type of fragment lacks a subject or a verb:

Fragment: The week spent at home just relaxing and soaking up the sun.

[*Week* is probably the intended subject but it has no verb.]

S

V

Revised: The week spent on the beach just relaxing and soaking up the sun was the best vacation I had in years.

Fragment: She selected a current news item as the topic of her essay. Then wondered if her choice was wise.

[The second of these word groups is a fragment because it has no subject for the verb *wondered*]

S

V

Revised: She selected a current news item as the topic of her essay. Then she wondered if her choice was wise.

\*When you proofread for fragments make sure that each sentence has a subject and a verb (-ing words are not complete verbs without a helping verb in front).

### **Fragments Caused by a Misplaced Period**

Most fragments are caused by detaching a phrase or dependent clause from the sentence to which it belongs.

Fragment: Ever since fifth grade, I have participated in one or more team sports. Beginning with the typical grammar school sports of basketball and volleyball.

[The second word group is a detached phrase that belongs to the sentence preceding it.]

Fragment: Travelers to Europe should consider visiting in the spring or fall. Because airfares and hotels are often cheaper then.

[The second word group is a dependent clause that was detached from the sentence before it.]

## Tips for Recognizing Sentence Fragments

1) Many fragments fall into one of these three categories:

- *Renamers*: These fragments rename the noun that precedes them.  
Example: I entered my apartment and saw **an unexpected guest**. A cat right in the middle of my living room.  
**Revised: I entered my apartment and saw an unexpected guest. There was a cat right in the middle of my living room.**
- *Adverb/Dependent Clauses*: These tell when, why or where something happened.  
Example: Philip is really upset. **Because** someone broke a window in his car.  
**Revised: Philip is really upset because someone broke a window in his car.**
- *-ing/-ed Fragments*: These fragments begin with a verb in the *-ing* or sometimes *-ed* form.  
Example: College gives you a whole new perspective. **Opening** your eyes to the world.  
**Revised: College gives you a whole new perspective, opening your eyes to the world.**

**If you are aware of these common types, you will be more likely to spot them in your own writing.**

2) You can put *I realize* in front of most complete sentences and make a new grammatical sentence; however, when you put *I realize* in front of a fragment, the result will not make sense. Apply this tip to the preceding three sentences:

**XXX I realize a cat right in the middle of my living room.**

**XXX I realize because someone broke a window in his car.**

**XXX I realize opening your eyes to a new world.**

3) Proofread your paper backward, one sentence at a time. Use one hand to cover up all but the last sentence in each paragraph. See if that sentence can stand alone. If it can, then uncover the next-to-last sentence to see if it can stand alone, and continue through your paper.