

## Campus Academic Resource Program

### Run-ons and Fragments

This handout will:

- Defining a Complete Sentence
- Defining Run-On Sentences
- Defining Independent and Dependent Clauses
- Explaining ways to recognize Run-On Sentences
- Providing methods to fix Run-On Sentences
- Defining a Fragmented Sentence
- Explaining ways to recognize Fragmented Sentences
- Providing methods to fix Fragmented Sentences

**What is a complete sentence?:** A complete sentence contains one complete thought and both a **subject** and a **predicate**.

- A **subject** is the main noun/pronoun the sentence speaks of.
- A **predicate** contains the main verb used to link the subject to another noun or adjective (or, the **complements** of the predicate).
  - I enjoy walking the dogs.
    - Subject: I
    - Predicate: enjoy walking the dogs
    - Main Verb: enjoy
- A complete sentence is also referred to as an **independent clause**.

### Run-on Sentences

**What is a run-on sentence?:** A run-on sentence is any sentence that does not have proper punctuation between **clauses**. This usually occurs between two **independent clauses**.

**Clauses:** A clause is a part of a sentence that always contains a **subject** and a **verb**, and often contains an **object**.

- **Independent Clauses:** These clauses are standalone sentences that represent one main idea.
- **Dependent Clauses:** These clauses do not create complete sentences on their own, and can be recognized by a **subordinate conjunction** or a **relative pronoun**.
  - A list of **subordinate conjunctions** and **relative pronouns** will be on the last page of this handout.

**How do we recognize run-on sentences?:** Run-on sentences can be recognized in two ways.

- There are clearly two independent clauses, but there is no punctuation separating them.
- There is proper punctuation, but the sentence lacks focus and contains more than one idea.

**How do we fix run-ons?:**

- First, recognize that there is a run-on sentence. This can be done by reading the sentence aloud. If there's a space where you take a breath, that's usually where a punctuation mark should go.

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- Second, break down the **structure of a sentence**, and recognize **sentence focus**.
- Third, break down the sentence into its **structural** form.
- Fourth, correct the run-on into a cohesive sentence or two sentences.

#### **Recognizing and Fixing Complex Run-on Sentences:**

- Some run-on sentences will have a mix of **independent** and **dependent clauses**.
- These sentences will likely contain more than one idea and a mix of misplaced punctuation.
- Often, these sentences will need a both correcting punctuation and the application of correct coordinating conjunctions.

#### **Examples:**

**Simple Run-on Sentence:** I have the ball my friend tommy wants to kick it.

S=Subject  
V=Verb  
O=Object

**Sentence Structure:** I have the ball my friend tommy wants to kick it.  
S V O S V O

- In this sentence structure we have two independent clauses without the proper punctuation.

#### **Two Ways to Fix the Sentence:**

1.
  - Insert the proper punctuation and coordinating conjunction
    - In this instance, let us use: **,and**

I have the ball **,and** my friend Tommy wants to kick it.

- By adding the comma and the coordinating conjunction, we are able to create one sentence with two independent clauses that make sense.

2.
  - Create two sentences by adding punctuation. This also may require changing parts of the subject or object in one or more of the clauses.

I have the ball **.** My friend Tommy wants to kick the ball.

- Notice that we had to change it to the ball. Also, this sentence seems to work better with the coordinating conjunction. Take into account that either of these fixes may be preferred when fixing run-on sentences.

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#### *Note on Simple Run-on Sentences:*

- Often the sentences will not be so clear cut.
- Next will be an example of how to fix a complex run-on sentence.

**Example of a Complex Run-on Sentence:** The boy who took my ice cream ran away with his mom after I yelled at him to stop, and he didn't stop even though I told him that I would tell on him to the mall security who were just a few doors down.

- To clarify the sentence we will highlight all clauses with [brackets], coordinating conjunctions in (parenthesis), subordinating conjunctions in **bold** and relative pronouns in *italics*.

[The boy who took my ice cream ran away with his mom] **after** [I yelled at him to stop] (, and) [he didn't stop] **even though** [I told him] **that** [I would tell on him to the mall security] *who* [were just a few doors down.]

#### **How to Fix This Sentence:**

- This sentence can be fixed in many ways.
  - However, since there is more than one idea, it will need to be broken up into multiple sentences *and* will require correcting punctuation.

#### **Example of Fixed Sentence:**

The boy who took my ice cream ran away with his mom.

I yelled at him to stop.

We add the adverbial conjunction to show that this sentence's preface relies on the previous sentence.



However, he didn't stop even though I told him that I would tell on him to the mall security, who were just a few doors down.

Because the last clause is a nonessential relative clause, we must add the comma to separate it from the previous clause.

We choose to end the sentence here because yelling at the boy and the boy running away are **two different ideas**.

Even though yelling at the boy to stop, and him not stopping may be the same idea, the coordinating conjunction (,and) allows us to separate these two independent clauses. Whereas the subordinate conjunction **even though** means the following clause needs to be attached to an independent clause.

#### **Notes on This Process:**

- Fixing these kinds of sentences may not require this level of complex grammatical understanding.
- Keeping it simple.
  - Find the main idea, each sentence should express **one idea**.
  - Try writing smaller sentences.
  - A good rule of thumb is that sentences should only have two clauses.

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- These sentences should be comprised of either two independent clauses, or one independent and subordinate clause.
- Try to keep the original meaning intact.
  - Try to change as little as possible, including adding too many words.
  - If the new sentence(s) sound strange, consider alternatives.

### Sentence Fragments

**What is a Sentence Fragment?** A sentence fragment can be any type of **clause** that is not attached to a **main clause**, or is a sentence that does not contain a subject or a verb. They usually happen when punctuation is placed between the **main clause** and the **fragment**. A **subordinate clause** without a main clause will always be a **fragment**.

### Main Clauses & Fragments:

- A **main clause** is a clause that has at least a **subject** and a **verb** that expresses an idea.
  - This could be as simple a sentence as: “Bruce slept.”
  - Or as complex as “Tony was always eating Pepper’s delectable cooking.”
- A fragment is a part of a sentence that relies on the main clause, but was made to stand alone.
  - Bruce slept. Soundly as a baby.
  - Tony was always eating Pepper’s delectable cooking, madly in love with it.
    - Both of these examples are different types of clauses that require different methods to fix.

### Examples of Fragments and How to Fix Them:

#### Subordinate Clause Fragment:

- These **fragments** occur when a period is put between an **independent clause** and a **subordinate clause**.
- These can most easily be recognized by a **subordinate conjunction** at the beginning of a sentence

**Example:** Steve likes to go bowling. Even though he prefers miniature golf.

Notice that the second sentence *starts* with a subordinating conjunction. The period creates the fragment.

**How to Fix:** There are multiple ways to fix this sentence.

- Remove the punctuation.
  - “Steve Rogers likes to go bowling even though he prefers miniature golf.”
- Reversing the order of the statement.
  - Even though he prefers miniature golf, Steve Rogers likes to go bowling.

When we reverse the order, we often have to add punctuation.

**Participle Phrase Fragments:**

- These **fragments** occur when a **past participle** or **irregular verb** starts the sentence.
- These can most easily be recognized by *-ed* or *-ing* verbs.
- These fragments frequently lack a subject.

**Example:** Dr. Banner bought extra large pants. Avoiding the possible rips in the future.

In each case of fixing this fragment we had to change the **verb tense**. This may not always be the case with **participle fragments**.

**How to Fix:**

- Reverse the order.
  - To avoid possible rips in the future, Dr. Banner bought extra large pants.
- Create one sentence.
  - Dr. Banner bought extra large pants to avoid possible rips in the future.
- There are other possible fixes, but these two seem to be the least complicated and best solutions.

**Infinitive Phrase Fragments:**

- These fragments begin a sentence with a **verbal clause**.
- This clause is composed of to+base verb. (i.e. to make)
- These fragments lack a subject.

**Example:** Nick used the trading cards. To make the team angry for the upcoming fight.

**How To Fix:**

- Remove the period.
  - Nick used the trading cards to make the team angry for the upcoming fight.
- Reverse.
  - To make the team angry for the upcoming fight, Nick used the trading cards.

★ **Exception:**

- If there is no direct object in the previous sentence we must fix this fragment differently.

**Example:** Nick slept. To dream all night was nice..

In order to make these two sentences correct, we added two things. First, a *linking transitive verb*. Second, a **subordinate conjunction**.

**How to Fix:**

- Add a subject.
  - Nick slept. He *felt that* dreaming all night was nice.
- Combine and add a verb.
  - Nick slept *feeling that* to dream all night was nice.

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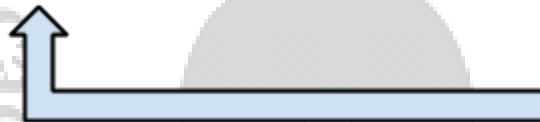
**Appositive Phrase Fragments:**

- These fragments begin with, or are entirely, an appositive phrase.
- These fragments either describe a direct object, or a subject.

**Example:** Clint had a bow. Well crafted, dark, and deadly.

**How To Fix:**

- Remove the period and add a *subordinating conjunction* and a **“to be” verb**.
  - Clint had a bow *that was* well crafted, dark, and deadly.
- Change and add the appositive phrase in front on the noun it describes.
  - Clint had a well crafted, dark and deadly, bow.



The second fix here is a bit more complicated because it requires changing punctuation. Now the well crafted bow is dark and deadly, whereas before the bow was well crafted, dark, and deadly.

**Other Types of Fragments:**

- There are many more types of fragments
  - The absence of a subject will almost always create a fragment.
  - Separate sentences that illustrate or exemplify an idea without a main verb may be fragments

**Examples:** Tony helped get the machine flying again. Jumping into action right away.  
The Odinson was fierce. For example, his powerful hammer, lightning, and strength.

**How to Fix:**

- Use similar techniques to those that have been shown throughout this handout.
- Removing the period and adding proper coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, or prepositions.
  - Tony helped get the machine flying again **by** jumping into action right away.
  - The Odinson was fierce **because of** his powerful hammer, lightning, and strength.
- Reverse the order and add proper punctuation or verbal phrase.
  - Jumping into action right away, Tony got the machine flying again.
  - His powerful hammer, lightning, and strength, **made** the Odinson fierce.

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#### *Final Notes on Fragments:*

- Although instinctual to use only punctuation to solve fragments, it should only be used in specific instances.
  - The semi-colon seems suitable in certain situations.
    - However, semi-colons can only be used to connect two **independent clauses**.
  - The colon may be used in some cases, though rare.
    - This can be used to fix a list or appositive fragment, however clauses will most likely need to be added.
    - From the example above:

The Odinson was fierce *because of his abilities*: a powerful hammer, lightning, and strength.

- Nearly all fragments can be fixed using two methods:
  - Removing the period that creates the fragment.
    - Often we won't need to change anything at all except removing the period
  - Reversing the order of sentences and adding correct punctuation.
    - Often fragments are simply phrases that are either in the wrong position, or mistakenly separated by commas or periods.

#### *Extra Tips:*

- Know the **Subject, Verb, Object** structure of clauses and sentences.
  - If you understand that all clauses require a subject and a verb, you may be less likely to create fragments.
- Try and create sentences with very little extra punctuation.
  - Often times, fragments can be caused by excessive punctuation.
  - Comma splices often create fragments.
- Keep fixes simple.
  - There are two main ways to fix fragments: reversing the order, and correcting the punctuation
  - However, one is usually less complicated than the other in each separate circumstance.
  - Try to always use the least complicated method to fix sentence fragments.
- For example: Natasha liked to eat gyros. Lamb, tahini, and flatbread were favorites.
  - How it should be fixed: Natasha liked to eat gyros *because* lamb, tahini, and flatbread were *her* favorites.
  - It can be fixed this way: *Because* lamb, tahini, and flatbread were favorites *of hers*, Natasha liked to eat gyros.
- Keeping it simple will help you learn to correct your own fragments easily.

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Subordinate Conjunctions and Relative Nouns

***Subordinate Conjunctions:***

after although as because before even if even though if in order that	once provided that rather than since so that than that though unless	until when whenever where whereas wherever whether while why
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***Relative Pronouns:***

whose whosoever whomever	who whom whoever	that which whichever
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- Any of these words will signal a subordinate clause.
- Use these words to create a subordinate clause.



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#### Works Cited

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