

WRITING COMPLETE, GRAMMATICALLY
CORRECT SENTENCES

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- Sentence Fragments
- Run-on Sentences
- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Parallel Structure

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

- A fragment is a sentence which is not complete, and therefore not grammatically correct. Sentence fragments are problematic because they are confusing to the reader.

THREE MAIN CAUSES OF FRAGMENTS:

- a missing subject
- a missing verb
- "danger" words which are not finished

FIND THE SUBJECT

- A subject is the noun or pronoun about which something is written. To find the subject of a sentence, identify who or what is doing the action.
- If there is no subject, the sentence is a fragment. Consider the two examples below.
 - "The student felt nervous before the speech."
 - "Thought about leaving the room."

FIND THE VERB

- A verb is the action word in a sentence.
- Verbs express action, existence or occurrence.
- To find the verb in a sentence, identify what happened. If there is no identifiable action, the sentence is a fragment.
- Consider the two examples below.
 - "Many scientists, such as Einstein, think in strange ways."
 - "Many scientists think in strange ways. Einstein, for example."

CHECK FOR "DANGER" WORDS.

- A danger word is one which introduces a thought that requires a follow-up phrase. Such words are sometimes called "cliff-hangers" because they begin a statement, but leave it "hanging" without a finish.
- Consider the phrases below.
 - "If you come home..."
 - "When the rain falls..."
 - "Because he is mean..."

DANGER WORDS

- Danger words are helpful when writing sentences, but one must be sure to include a concluding phrase when these words are used.
- Commonly used danger words include: after, unless, although, how, as if, when, because, where, before, while, if, until, once, so that, since, whether.

RUN-ON SENTENCES

- A run-on sentence is one which actually contains two (or more) complete sentences without the proper punctuation to create separate sentences.

FORMS OF THE RUN-ON

- the "comma splice" in which a comma is inserted between two complete sentences where a period should actually be used
- a lack of punctuation where a semi- colon or period is needed.

INCORRECT EXAMPLES - THE COMMA SPLICE

- John is a musician, he plays the guitar for a living.
- The girl walked home, she decided not to ride the bus.
- He could only guess at the number of guests who attended the party, the entire yard was filled with people.

CORRECT EXAMPLES

- John is a musician. He plays the guitar for a living.
- The girl walked home. She decided not to ride the bus.
- He could only guess at the number of guests who attended the party. The entire yard was filled with people.

INCORRECT EXAMPLES –LACK OF PUNCTUATION

- There is a problem with the television however no one is available to fix it. Nobody knows what really happened the policeman said there was a fight. That is the problem when people have conflict they attack each other personally.

CORRECT EXAMPLES

- There is a problem with the television; however, no one is available to fix it.
- There is a problem with the television. However, no one is available to fix it.
- Nobody knows what really policeman said there happened; the was a fight.
- Nobody knows what really policeman said there was a fight.
- That is the problem when people have conflict; they attack each other personally.
- That is the problem when people have conflict. They attack each other personally.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

- In order for a sentence to be grammatically correct, the subject and verb must both be singular or plural. In other words, the subject and verb must agree with one another in their tense. If the subject is in plural form, the verb should also be in plural form (and vice versa). To ensure subject-verb agreement, identify the main subject and verb in the sentence, then check to see if they are both plural or singular.

INCORRECT EXAMPLES –SUBJECT VERB AGREEMENT

- "The group of students are complaining about grades."
 - The main subject in this sentence is "group," which is singular. The main verb is "are complaining," which is plural.
- "A recipe with more than six ingredients are too complicated."
 - The main subject in this sentence is "recipe," which is singular. The main verb is "are," which is plural.

CORRECT EXAMPLES

- "The group of students is complaining about grades."
- "A recipe with more than six ingredients is too complicated."

INCORRECT EXAMPLES - PRONOUN- REFERENCE AGREEMENT

- "A manager should always be honest with their employees."
- "Organizations must be careful about discriminating against its employees."
- "If you really care about somebody, let them make their own choices."

CORRECT EXAMPLES

- "A manager should always be honest with his (or her) employees."
- "Organizations must be careful about discriminating against their employees."
- "If you really care about somebody, let him (or her) make his (or her) own choices."

PARALLEL STRUCTURE

- The parallel structure of a sentence refers to the extent to which different parts of the sentence match each other in form. When more than one phrase or description is used in a sentence, those phrases or descriptions should be consistent with one another in their form and wording. Parallel structure is important because it enhances the ease with which the reader can follow the writer's idea.

INCORRECT EXAMPLES- PARALLEL STRUCTURE

- Example One: "He is strong and a tough competitor."
 - Notice that "strong" and "a tough competitor" are not the in the same form. "Strong" and "competitive" are consistent in form.
- Example Two: "The new coach is a smart strategist, an effective manager, and works hard."
 - Notice that "a smart strategist" and "an effective manager" are consistent with one another, but not consistent with "works hard."
- Example Three: "In the last minute of the game, John intercepted the football, evaded the tacklers, and a touchdown was scored."
 - Notice that the first two phrases in this sentence are consistent with one another: "intercepted the football" and "evaded the tacklers." However, the final phrase, "and a touchdown was scored" is not consistent with the first two phrases.

CORRECT EXAMPLES

- Example One: "He is strong and competitive."
- Example Two: "The new coach is a smart strategist, an effective manager, and a hard worker."
- Example Three: "In the last minute of the game, John intercepted the football, evaded the tacklers, and scored a touchdown."