

FRAGMENTS & RUN-ON SENTENCES

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

A sentence fragment is a sentence that does not contain a complete thought or action—a sentence that does not ‘do’ anything—usually because it is missing a subject or a verb.

Incorrect: The dog in the grass.

This is not a complete sentence because it lacks a verb (an action for the dog to perform).

To correct the sentence, give the dog an action:

Correction: The dog in the grass. → The dog **rests** in the grass.

Now, the dog is doing something.

Be careful: A sentence is not necessarily valid even if it appears to have a verb.

Incorrect: The dog lying in the grass.

This is not a complete sentence because “lying” is used as an adjective and does not actually provide an action. The word “lying” tells us that the dog is a “lying dog.”

To correct this sentence, the dog needs to be performing an action:

Correction: The dog lying in the grass. → The dog lying in the grass **is** tired.

Now we know what the dog is doing in the grass (being tired).

Additional Tips on Fragment Sentences:

- Don’t confuse fragment sentences with minor sentences: “No way,” and “The more the merrier,” are not full sentences but are fine in speech or in informal writing—but usually not in a formal paper.
- Look for sentences that start with dependent markers (conjunctions). These words indicate that the clause is dependent and must be attached to an independent clause. Some common examples include: “when,” “although,” “because,” “before,” “even if/though” “since,” “though,” “until.”

Example: Although the dog was tired. → Although the dog was tired, it kept chasing the ball.



CONTACT US:

(702) 895-3908 | writingcenter@unlv.edu
unlv.edu/writing-center



- Don't let a very long sentence with no controlling verb fool you into thinking it's not a fragment.

Example: The dog on the grass, his ears perked, his eyes attentive and alert, his collar hanging loosely around his neck, sunlight shining on his face, his tail wagging happily. → The dog on the grass, his ears perked, his eyes attentive and alert, his collar hanging loosely around his neck, sunlight shining on his face, his tail wagging happily, **waits** for food.

RUN-ON SENTENCES

A run-on sentence is where two sentences are connected with no punctuation.

Incorrect: The fog was thick she could not find her way home.

This is an incorrect sentence because it attempts to smash two separate sentences with their own subjects and verbs together: "The fog was thick." and "She could not find her way home."

A comma is not strong enough to connect two independent clauses without a conjunction. Simply placing a comma between two independent clauses creates a comma splice.

Incorrect: The fog was thick, she could not find her way home. (This is still a run-on sentence.)

Several ways to correct run-on sentences:

One way is to split the two sentences with a period or semicolon. A semicolon is sometimes acceptable if both clauses on either side of the semicolon are complete sentences that are closely related.

Correct: The fog was thick. She could not find her way home.

The fog was thick; she could not find her way home.

This can also be fixed with a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so):

Correct: The fog was thick, so she could not find her way home.

The sentence can also be flipped with the conjunction "because".

Correct: She could not find her way home because the fog was thick.

Experiment with run-on sentences. Try a variety of corrections, as seen above. Each punctuation mark creates a unique tone in writing and should be used to highlight that tone/feeling in a sentence.

