SENTENCE FRAGMENTS
Grammar
ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS
Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences that stand on their own as if they were complete sentences. Sentence fragments are capitalized and punctuated as if they were complete sentences, but they are missing essential information to make them grammatically correct sentences.

Note: Some authors may choose to use sentence fragments for stylistic reasons. This is more common in creative writing than it is in academic settings.

Complete Sentences Must:

1. Have a subject and a verb
   NOT Answering the question.
   This fragment does not contain a subject.
   NOT The instructor who invigilated the exam.
   This fragment does not contain a main verb. A verb is present in the dependent clause, but is missing in the independent clause.
   Note: Commands do not necessarily have to have a subject. The following is an acceptable sentence.
   Please sit down.

2. Make sense on their own
   NOT For example, exams and labs.
   This fragment lacks a complete thought. What is the true subject and verb?
   NOT If he goes to the movies.
   This fragment, although it contains both a subject and a verb, does not make sense on its own. It is a dependent clause and cannot stand on its own. It is an abandoned clause.

Correcting Sentence Fragments:
Sentence fragment corrections depend on what is missing.

1. Missing subject and/or verb parts
   (Add subject and auxiliary verb.)
   o Answering the question.
   The student is answering the question.
   o The student is answering the question.
   o The instructor who invigilated the exam.
   (Add main verb or delete subordinator.)
   The instructor invigilated the exam.
   The instructor who invigilated the exam was new.

   (Add subject and main verb.)
   o For example, the exams and labs.
   For example, the instructor monitored the exams and labs.

   Fragmented: She located Hungary on the map. Between Austria and Romania.
   Revised: She located Hungary on the map between Austria and Romania.
(2) Missing clause

Fragments often belong to a sentence that either precedes or follows it. To correct them, they can be joined to the proper complete sentence.

- *If he goes to the movies.* He will not have enough time to study for his test.
- *If he goes to the movies.* (This is a dependent clause. It depends on an independent clause to make sense.)
- *He will not have enough time to study for his test.* (This is an independent clause and a complete sentence. It makes sense on its own.)

Observe how the fragments (in italics) are corrected by joining them to the corresponding sentence:

- *If he goes to the movies, he will not have enough time to study for his test.*

**Note:** A comma is needed between the two clauses when the dependent clause appears before the independent clause. If the independent clause appears first, no comma is needed.

**Examples:**

- Fragmented: *Once electricity became commonly used.* Day-to-day life was completely altered.
- Revised: *Once electricity became commonly used, day-to-day life was completely altered.*

- Fragmented: *Amphibians use a positive pressure system to breath.* *Which forces air into their lungs.*
- Revised: *Amphibians use a positive pressure system to breath which forces air into their lungs.*

In some cases, two fragments may be joined together to create a complete sentence.

**Fragmented:** *That which doesn’t kill you. Only makes you stronger.*

**Revised:** *That which doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger.*

**Sources:** *(MLA 8th Edition)*
