Success Center Tips for

Revising Fragments and Run-Ons

Fragments

A fragment is an incomplete thought incorrectly punctuated as if it were a complete thought. To identify fragments, ask what has been left out of a word group:

- Do you see a subject (person or thing doing the acting)?
- Do you see a complete verb (the helping and action words)?
- Do you see *only* a dependent clause?

Fragment: *Deciding what groceries to buy.*
- Do you see a subject? NO—fragment.
- Do you see a complete verb? NO—fragment.
- Do you see *only* a dependent clause? YES—fragment.

The italicized group of words is a fragment. When the word group is missing a subject or verb or does not express a complete thought, it is a fragment. **To edit this type of fragment, add the missing words.**

Complete thought: *I was deciding what groceries to buy.* **(subject and verb added)**

Editing Dependent Clause Fragments

- Transform them into sentences by removing the period and joining all the words.

    Fragment: *Kay creates oil paintings from photographs. That resemble the artwork of the Impressionists.*
    Complete
    Thought: *Kay creates oil paintings from photographs that resemble the artwork of the Impressionists*

- Attach fragments that begin with subordinating words (*after, although, because, since, if, while, even though, though, when*) to a nearby independent clause, replacing the period with a comma.

    Fragment: *Because I was deciding what groceries to buy for the luau party. I spent two hours in the new grocery store.*
    Complete
    Thought: *Because I was deciding what groceries to buy for the luau party, I spent two hours in the new grocery store.*

Run-on (Fused) Sentences and Comma Splices

When a writer joins two independent clauses (complete ideas that can stand alone as a sentence) incorrectly, a run-on sentence or comma splice results.

Run-on (fused) sentence: *College is too serious I am not ready to grow up.*

There are five ways to edit a run-on sentence:

- **Add a semicolon** (Note: a colon or dash is a less common editing solution):

  College is too serious; I am not ready to grow up.

- **Add a comma and coordinating conjunction** (**f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut , **o**r, **y**et, **s**o—"fanboys"):

  *College is too serious, **yet** I am not ready to grow up.*

- **Add a subordinating conjunction** (e.g., when, after, while, since, because, even though) **and set off the clause with a comma**:

  Even though *college is too serious, I am not ready to grow up.*

- **Make two sentences**: *College is too serious. I am not ready to grow up.*

- **Use a conjunctive adverb with proper punctuation** (e.g., therefore, for example, however):

  *College is too serious; **however,** I am not ready to grow up.*

Comma Splices

Comma splices use a comma to separate complete sentences when a period or semicolon is needed to clarify ideas and construct a complete unit of meaning.

Comma Splice:
The leader of the bicycling group is seventy-five years old, he rode four hundred miles last year.

There are four common ways to correct a comma splice.

- **Make two sentences**: *College is too serious. I am not ready to grow up.*

- **Add a semicolon**:
  The leader of the bicycling group is seventy-five years old; he rode four hundred miles last year.

- **Add a comma and a coordinating conjunction**:
  *The leader of the bicycling group is seventy-five years old, **but** he rode four hundred miles last year.*

- **Add subordinating conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs** (see examples above) **and set off the phrase with a comma**:
  Even though *the leader of the bicycling group is seventy-five years old, he rode four hundred miles last year.*

Maimon, Elaine P. et al. *A Writer's Resource*. 3rd ed., McGraw Hill, 2009. (See P. 446-58)