

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Fragments are incomplete sentences. Usually, they are pieces of sentences that have become disconnected from the main clause. You may notice fragments in the things that you read — novels, newspaper articles, online articles, magazines, etc. Sometimes fragments are used stylistically in writing. In formal, academic writing, however, you should avoid fragments.

A COMPLETE SENTENCE:

- ▶ Names a **subject** — the who or what that performs the action
- ▶ Has a complete **verb** that indicates tense, person, and number.
- ▶ Includes at least one **independent clause** and does not begin with a subordinating word (a word that connects a dependent clause to an independent clause)

AN INDEPENDENT CLAUSE is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought—an independent clause is a simple sentence.

Simple Sentence—subject, verb, predicate

Rebecca studied in the coffee shop for her chemistry quiz.
Subject Verb Predicate (expresses what is true about the subject)

Compound Sentence—at least two independent clauses connected by a coordinator/connector word

Rebecca studied in the coffee shop for her chemistry quiz, and later she wrote her paper.
Subject Verb Predicate Connecting Word Subject Verb Predicate

Complex Sentence—one independent clause (main clause) and one dependent clause

Rebecca studied in the coffee shop for hours because she had a chemistry quiz the next day.
Subject Verb Predicate Subordinating Word Dependent Clause

A DEPENDENT CLAUSE is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb but does not express a complete thought. A dependent clause cannot be a sentence. Often you can identify a dependent clause because it begins with a connecting (conjunctive or subordinating) word—see the “Connecting Word List” handout to learn what these words are.

Because Rebecca studied in the coffee shop for hours.
Although Rebecca studied in the coffee shop for hours.
And Rebecca studied in the coffee shop for hours.
(Thoughts are incomplete—they are fragments of thoughts.)

EXAMPLES OF FRAGMENTS:

No complete subject or verb: For example, the library.
Revision: For example, MSU built the library.

No subject: Built the library, for example.
Revision: MSU built the library, for example.

Dependent clause only: Because students needed a place to do research.
Revision: MSU built the library because students needed a place to do research.