

Grammar Practice: Sentence Fragments

A fragment is an incomplete thought, but is punctuated as a complete sentence. This can happen for the follow reasons:

1. The word group is missing a **subject**.
2. The word group is missing a **verb**.
3. The word group has both a subject and a verb, but is preceded by a subordinating conjunction (thus it's a **dependent clause**), and it's not connected to an independent clause.

Examples of Subordinating Conjunctions: after, although, as, as if, because, before, even though, if, since, so, though, unless, until, when, whenever, whereas, wherever, while

Example 1

When I go to school. I need to remember to bring my backpack.

The first word group above is a fragment. It does have a subject ("I") and a verb ("go"), but because it is preceded by "When," a subordinating conjunction (a word that makes the clause that follows it dependent), it can't stand alone. This fragment could simply be fixed by replacing the period with a comma:

When I go to school, I need to remember to bring my backpack.

Example 2

I've always liked outdoor activities. For example, camping and hiking. I try to get out of town to the woods whenever I can.

The fragment is, "For example, camping and hiking." There is no subject. Who is camping and hiking? Well, of course it is the "I" from the previous sentence, but because that "I" is not in the second sentence, it is a fragment. There is also no active verb in the word group (words ending in "-ing" cannot stand alone as verbs. Here is an easy way to fix it:

I've always liked outdoor activities. For example, I love camping and hiking. I try to get out of town to the woods whenever I can.

Example 3

Dave helped his best friend move. Carefully boxing and lifting all of her most treasured possessions.

Reading this aloud may not sound wrong, but if we examine the second part of the statement, "Carefully boxing and lifting all of her most treasured possessions," we see that while it is punctuated as a complete sentence, it is not a complete thought. Who is boxing and lifting possessions? This statement is missing a subject and is therefore a fragment. Changing the period to a comma would fix this error:

Dave helped his best friend move, carefully boxing and lifting all of her most treasured possessions.

Practice

Read each paragraph below. If the paragraph contains a fragment, select the letter of that fragment. If the paragraph contains no fragment, select the letter E, "No fragment."

1. ^ABill replacing the alternator in his restored 1966 Corvette. ^BIt wasn't easy finding one.
^CHis brother finally drove him up to Eustis where he located one in a junkyard. ^DHe was lucky to find it. ^E[No fragment]
2. ^AAs Serita walked to the center of the stage, the crowd in the stadium quieted. ^BShe was the one they were all waiting to hear. ^CThe valedictorian who would speak for the entire senior class. ^DShe cleared her throat and began. ^E[No fragment]
3. ^AJan is excited about her new job at Taco Bell. ^BShe's eager to open her first checking account. ^CSince her old Escort is about to give out, her plan is to save up enough money for a new car. ^DMaking her folks are very proud of her. ^E[No fragment]
4. ^ATrent slowly backed the dirt bike out of the back of the truck and down the ramp. ^BHe sat there proudly. ^CHis friend Paul smiled and crossed his arms. ^DThe most beautiful bike that either of them had ever seen. ^E[No fragment]
5. ^AWhenever K-Mart has a really good sale. ^BMy sister is at the front door when the store opens. ^CShe's learned the hard way that it's best to pay cash. ^DShe hates those big Visa bills. ^E[No fragment]
6. ^AJones' Barbecue serves delicious chicken, pork, and beef sandwiches. ^BI almost always order the chicken basket. ^CIt comes with fries and coleslaw. ^DIf I'm really hungry, I get a side order of baked beans. ^E[No fragment]
7. ^AA new convenience store out by the Seminole Towne Center Mall. ^BIt opened last Monday morning. ^CI read in the paper this evening that it has already been robbed. ^DThe police caught the robbers before they could even get out of the parking lot. ^E[No fragment]
8. ^ANina had often heard stories of the beauty of India. ^BShe had longed to visit there since she was a small child. ^CWhen her aunt offered to give her an airline ticket for graduation. ^DShe jumped at the chance. ^E[No fragment]

Answer Key: 1. A 2. C 3. D 4. D 5. A 6. E 7. A 8. C