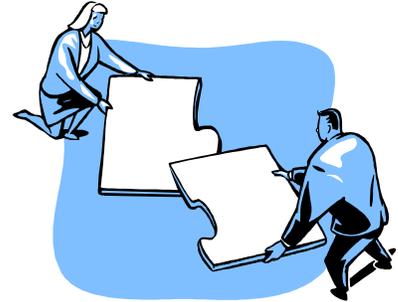


Sentence Fragments and How to Eliminate Them

So. You are having trouble. With sentence fragments. Incomplete thoughts punctuated as sentences. But which can't really stand alone. Affecting your writing's coherence, interrupting its flow.

- **If you think the above passage is halting and choppy, you're right.**
 - Only one group of words above can stand alone as a simple sentence: "You are having trouble."
 - That sentence includes a subject ("You") and a verb structure ("are having"). It even has a direct object, but let's not get bogged down with parts of speech more than we have to.



Simply put, a fragment is an incomplete thought which is punctuated as a complete sentence. This can happen for one of three reasons:

- The word group is missing a subject;
- The word group is missing a verb;
- Or 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.

That sounds confusing, so here's an example of the last instance:

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. Of course, the reason you don't notice is because it appears next to the independent clause to which it should be connected. This one could simply be fixed by replacing the period with a comma.
- You might think you'd never leave out a subject or a verb in a sentence, but it does happen, mostly because it's easy to think the fragment makes sense when placed in the context of a bunch of sentences. Here's an example:

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 above is, "For example, camping and hiking." There's no subject in there: who is camping and hiking? Well, of course it's the "I" from the previous sentence, but because that "I" isn't in the second sentence, it's a fragment. Worse, there's not even a verb in that word group (words ending in "-ing" can't stand alone as verbs). Here's 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.

That's a start. More on fragments can be found in the handbook for your writing class. If you don't have a writing handbook, the CSSC staff will be happy to find you a similar text for more help. Now go, and make fragments no more!