



Fragments: A Correction Guide

A sentence fragment is a group of words pretending to be a sentence (Hacker 226). A sentence consists of an independent clause, which includes a subject and a verb. The way to test to see if you have fragments in your essays is to ask yourself three questions.

1. Is there a subject?
2. Is there a verb?
 - a. If yes to 1 and 2, then you have sentence. If no, then you have a fragment.
3. Does your sentence start with 'Because' or 'when'?
 - a. If yes, then you have a fragment. If no, then you ask question 1 and 2.

Here are some examples of **fragments** in bold and *complete sentences* in italics.

Leaving her team at a time when we needed her.

Coach Dietz walked off the field in the middle of a game, leaving her team at a time when we needed her.

Because the one I have now isn't working out too well

I need to find a new roommate because the one I have now isn't working out to well.

Since the weather will be terrible, you should stay in this coming weekend.

Think of a fragment as an incomplete thought that needs – and is **dependent** on – a complete sentence. A fragment cannot exist without being connected to a complete sentence. Here are the same examples of fragments with corrections.

- **Leaving her team at a time when we needed her**, *Coach Dietz walked off the field in the middle of a game.*
- **Because the one I have now isn't working out too well**, *I need to find a new roommate.*
- **Since the weather will be terrible**, *you should stay in this coming weekend.*

Sometimes, fixing a fragment is not that easy. Some **fragments** are written as main clauses but lack a *direct object* or main verb. [Note that the direct object in each revision below is *italicized*, and the verb is underlined.]

- Fragment: **A story with deep thoughts and emotions.**
- Revision: Add a verb and *direct object*: **A story with deep thoughts and emotions inspires *the mind*.**
- Fragment: **The rambunctious kids.**



- Revision:
 - Add a verb: **The rambunctious kids raged.**
 - Add a *direct object*: **The rambunctious kids rode *motor bikes*.**

Some **fragments** are written with prepositions and lack a subject. These **fragments** can be corrected by removing the *preposition* or by rearranging the sentence.

- Fragment: *With the ultimate effect of all advertising is to sell the product.*
- Revision:
 - Remove *preposition*: **The ultimate effect of all advertising is to sell the product.**
- Fragment:
 - *By paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.*
- Revisions:
 - Remove *preposition*: **Paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.**
- Fragment:
 - *For doing freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired.*
- Revisions:
 - Remove *preposition*: **Doing freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired.**
 - Rearrange: **Phil got fired for doing freelance work for a competitor.**

These last three examples of fragments with no subjects are also known as “mixed constructions,” that is, sentences constructed out of mixed parts. They start one way but end with a regular verb. Usually the object of the preposition is intended as the subject of the sentence, so removing the preposition at the beginning is usually the easiest way to edit such errors.