



Sentence Structure

Sentences

The following guidelines will help you with writing clear, concise, and grammatically correct sentences. Specifically, the following examples are common errors people make when writing. Try to avoid these mistakes and use the suggestions to help you correct your errors.

Fragments: Fragment sentences occur when your sentence is merely a dependent clause. Consider the following sentence:

Because I didn't see the stop sign.

This sentence is a fragment because it is a dependent clause. You may also notice that the sentence seems to be an incomplete thought; you might be wondering what happened because the writer didn't see the stop sign. By pairing this dependent clause with an independent clause, we fix the sentence:

I kept driving because I didn't see the stop sign.

Fragment sentences also occur when a sentence lacks both a subject and a verb. Consider the following sentence:

Ran into an old friend at the mall.

This fragment sentence has a verb, "ran", but lacks a subject. By including a subject, we can correct the sentence:

I ran into an old friend at the mall.

Run-ons: Run-on sentences occur when your sentence contains more than one independent clause. An independent clause has both a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. Consider the following sentence:

I stopped by Manuel's house he was busy getting ready for the party.

There are two subjects ("I" and "he") and two verbs ("stopped" and "was") in this sentence. Therefore, there are two independent clauses: 1. "I stopped by Manuel's house" and 2. "He was busy getting ready for the party."

You can fix a run-on sentence by separating the two independent clauses with a semi-colon or a comma and a conjunction. You can also fix a run-on sentence by simply breaking the sentence up. Below are some corrected versions of our example run-on:

- I stopped by Manuel's house, but he was busy getting ready for the party.
- I stopped by Manuel's house; he was busy getting ready for the party.
- I stopped by Manuel's house. He was busy getting ready for the party.

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Consider the following paragraph:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/index.php?category_id=2&sub_category_id=2&article_id=6



I would like to get a new job. I want a job that will challenge me. I will prepare my resume to get a new job. I should also have someone look over my resume to give me advice. I will find a new job after I prepare my resume by searching job listings on the Internet and in the newspaper.

Do you notice how all the paragraph's sentences sound similar? Each begins with the same subject—"I." Also, the sentences are all the same structurally because they begin with a subject and a verb. Finally, each sentence is about the same length. We can make this paragraph sound far more interesting if we vary the sentences a bit. Consider the revised paragraph below.

I would like to get a new job that will challenge me. First, I will prepare my resume and have someone look it over to give me advice. After I prepare my resume, I will search job listings on the Internet and in the newspaper.