



UNIVERSITY OF
**DETROIT
MERCY**

Sentence Fragments

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The Writing Center
DETROIT MERCY

What is a sentence fragment?

• A sentence fragment is an incomplete thought – a “piece” of a sentence that is missing a crucial element.

⇒ A sentence fragment leaves the reader wondering who, what, when, where, why, how, etc.

⇒ A sentence fragment usually creates confusion for the reader.

• A sentence fragment is an attempt at writing a complete sentence (independent clause), but it is missing a part of speech or another necessary phrase or element such as:

⇒ •A subject

Example of sentence missing subject: Runs quickly.

⇒ •A verb

Example of sentence missing a verb: It on me.

How to fix sentence fragments:

1. Provide missing subject:

- Fragment: Runs quickly
- Correction: She runs quickly.

Explanation: By filling in the subject, and telling the reader WHO, the fragment becomes a complete thought and an independent clause.

2. Provide missing verb:

- Fragment: It on me.
- Correction: It jumped on me.

Explanation: By adding an appropriate verb, and telling the reader WHAT action is taking place, the fragment becomes a complete thought and an independent clause.

3. Provide missing subject and verb:

- Fragment: To the store for bread.
- Correction: I went to the store for bread.

Explanation: By adding a subject and a verb and telling the reader WHO the sentence is about and WHAT action is taking place, the fragment becomes a complete thought and an independent clause.

4. Missing another necessary element such as a direct object:

- Fragment: He likes.
- Correction: He likes lacrosse.

Explanation: By adding a direct object to complete the thought, the reader now knows WHAT is liked by the subject. The complete thought becomes an independent clause.

Important note: Sometimes a dependent clause, when not properly attached to an independent clause, will look like a fragment. *Example: Because it was my birthday.*

Where is the problem? The reader doesn't know WHAT is because of your birthday, and that would be answered by attaching it to an **Independent Clause**:

I celebrated all night *because it was my birthday.*