



Sentence Fragments

Complete sentences have a subject (noun) and a predicate (verb), and they express a complete thought. Sentence fragments often lack a subject or a predicate. Sometimes, they are dependent clauses that do not make sense on their own, and must therefore be attached to a main clause.

Complete sentence: I dance.
Sentence fragment: Although I dance.

In order to determine if a sentence is a sentence fragment, ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Who or what is performing the action?

If you can answer this question, you have identified the subject.

- ▶ What is the subject doing?

If you can answer this question, you have identified the predicate.

- ▶ Does the sentence present a complete thought?

If not, the sentence is a sentence fragment, even if it contains both a subject and a predicate.

For example: Because he believed that this film would make him a star.

Subject: He

Predicate: believed

Complete thought: None. We do not know what happened as a result of his belief.

Note: Although creative writers often use sentence fragments to achieve a poetic effect such as illustrating a character's stream of consciousness, sentence fragments are unacceptable in academic writing.

Practice Exercise

Revise the sentences below to eliminate all sentence fragments. You may need to add punctuation or additional words.¹

1. Maurice kept nodding his head as the coach explained the play. Thinking all the time that it would never work.
2. She majored in geology. Because she was interested in rocks.
3. While many students must work long hours at jobs in addition to attending classes.
4. I offered her a ticket to the Iron Maiden show. A show she had always wanted to see.
5. Because pie, ice cream, and candy bars have practically no nutritional value.
6. Whereas older cars lack complex pollution controls, newer cars.
7. If nothing had come of her initial complaint, her safety in the workplace being fully assured by an employee benefits contract.
8. I argued with two of my fellow students. First with Edward and then with Colin.

Answers

1. Maurice kept nodding his head as the coach explained the play, thinking all the time that it would never work.
2. She majored in geology because she was interested in rocks.
3. Many students must work long hours at jobs in addition to attending classes.
4. I offered her a ticket to the Iron Maiden show, a show she had always wanted to see.
5. Because pie, ice cream, and candy bars have practically no nutritional value, you should eat them in moderation.
6. Whereas older cars lack complex pollution controls, newer cars are much more environmentally friendly.
7. If nothing had come of her initial complaint, her safety in the workplace being fully assured by an employee benefits contract, she would have sued the company.
8. I argued with two of my fellow students: first with Edward, and then with Colin.

¹ Adapted from Exercised from English Simplified, 7th Edition. HarperCollins pp. 59.

