

Complete Sentences and Sentence Fragments

Complete Sentences

A *sentence* is a word group that contains a subject and a verb and that expresses a complete thought. Notice that sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.

EXAMPLES The game was canceled. [The subject is *game*. The verb is *was canceled*.

The word group expresses a complete thought and is, therefore, a sentence.]

Was the game canceled? [The subject is *game*. The verb is *Was canceled*.

The word group expresses a complete thought and is, therefore, a sentence.]

Please call Mary this afternoon. [The subject *you* is understood. The verb is *call*. The word group expresses a complete thought and is, therefore, a sentence.]

What a great game that was! [The subject is *that*. The verb is *was*. The word group expresses a complete thought and is, therefore, a sentence.]

EXERCISE A Use proofreading marks to add capital letters and appropriate end marks to the following word groups to make them sentences.

Example 1. what a fun vacation we had! [Capitalize the first letter of the first word of a sentence. This sentence should end with an exclamation point.]

1. which book should she buy [Which word should be capitalized? What end mark should be used?]
2. don't worry about that
3. my brother will be there at noon
4. have you seen the new exhibit at the museum
5. what an interesting book this is

Sentence Fragments

Incomplete sentences are called sentence fragments. A *sentence fragment* is a word or word group that looks like a sentence but that does not have a subject, does not have a verb, or that does not express a complete thought. Because it is incomplete, a sentence fragment can confuse your reader.

FRAGMENT Ran under the table. [The word group does not have a subject. What ran under the table?]

SENTENCE **The cat** ran under the table. [*The cat* was added to make a complete sentence.]

FRAGMENT Mexico City the capital of Mexico and possibly the largest city in the world. [The word group does not have a verb.]

- SENTENCE** Mexico City **is** the capital of Mexico and possibly the largest city in the world. [The verb *is* is added to make a complete sentence.]
- FRAGMENT** Because it rained. [The fragment does not express a complete thought. What happened because it rained?]
- SENTENCE** Because it rained, **the game was canceled**. [The subject *game* and the verb *was canceled* were added to make a complete sentence.]

EXERCISE B Identify each of the following word groups as a sentence fragment or a complete sentence. On the line provided, write *F* for each sentence fragment. Write *S* for each sentence.

Example F 1. During a tropical storm in a coastal region. [This word group does not have a subject or a verb and does not express a complete thought.]

6. The longest river in the world the Nile. [Does the word group have both a subject and a verb? Does it express a complete thought?]
7. Which flows through several countries.
8. The baby slept soundly all through the night.
9. What an exciting trip we had!
10. After she left for rehearsal.

EXERCISE C Rewrite each sentence fragment on the line provided, adding words to make the fragment a complete sentence. If an item is already a sentence, write *S* on the line provided.

Example 1. His middle name, taken from his grandfather. [What is his middle name? The word group does not have a subject or a verb.] Michael is his middle name, taken from his grandfather.

11. After being in class for only a week. [Does the word group express a complete thought?]

12. Swims in the public pool downtown.

13. Delighted, James did a somersault.

14. The player coming down the court with the ball.

15. Before Rachel sings.

Run-on Sentences

Identifying Run-on Sentences

A *run-on sentence* is a word group made up of two or more complete sentences that have been run together. The sentences either have no punctuation between them or have only a comma. Run-on sentences make it hard for the reader to tell where one thought ends and another begins.

- RUN-ON** John and Mark have joined the team their first game is today. [No punctuation separates the two complete sentences.]
- CORRECT** John and Mark have joined the team. Their first game is today. [A period separates the two sentences.]
- RUN-ON** John and Mark have joined the team, their first game is today. [Only a comma separates the two complete sentences.]
- CORRECT** John and Mark have joined the team, **and** their first game is today. [A comma and the conjunction *and* separate the two sentences.]

EXERCISE A Decide which of the following sentences are run-on sentences. If a word group is a run-on, write *run-on* on the line provided. If the sentence is correct, write C on the line provided.

Example run-on 1. The ship captain looked worried a storm was coming. [This word group has two complete sentences, but there is no punctuation between them.]

- _____ 1. Katherine was tired and bored with television she decided to go to sleep. [Are the complete sentences separated by the correct punctuation?]
- _____ 2. Bobby received a new bat, glove, and cap, and he was ready to play ball.
- _____ 3. The presidential election of November 7, 2000, was too close to call it was a history-making event.
- _____ 4. Rudy and Sheila are both running for class president only one candidate can win.
- _____ 5. The pond was dark and cold Mabel decided not to go for a swim.

Correcting Run-on Sentences

Run-on sentences can be corrected by making them two separate sentences or by adding punctuation and a connecting word such as *and*, *or*, or *but*.

- RUN-ON** It rained hard for two days the river was rising.
- CORRECT** It rained hard for two days. The river was rising. [Adding a period and a capital letter makes the run-on into two separate sentences.]
- RUN-ON** It rained hard for two days the river was rising.
- CORRECT** It rained hard for two days, **and** the river was rising. [Adding a comma and the connecting word *and* makes the run-on a compound sentence.]

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EXERCISE B Use proofreading symbols to rewrite each run-on sentence by making two sentences or by inserting a comma and a connecting word to separate the two sentences that have been run together. If a sentence is already correct, write *C* on the line provided.

Examples _____ 1. His sister Jane moved to Arizona^o she did not like the cold weather up north. [The run-on sentence has no punctuation. Adding a period and a capital letter makes it two sentences.]

 C 2. Richard shoveled snow from the driveway, but he did not have time to do the sidewalk. [The two complete sentences are separated by a comma and the conjunction *but*, so this sentence is already correct.]

_____ 6. Paul had his guitar and amplifiers he still needed to take lessons. [Is the sentence correctly punctuated? Do a conjunction and a comma separate the two complete sentences?]

_____ 7. The parade marched down Main Street, and hundreds of people lined the street. [Do a conjunction and a comma separate the two complete sentences?]

_____ 8. Randy and Liz were invited to a dinner party they will bring a dessert.

_____ 9. The auditorium doors opened all of the children rushed to their seats.

_____ 10. We could go fishing with my brother we could go to the park with my sister.

_____ 11. Chasing a squirrel, the kitten ran up a tree it can't get down.

_____ 12. Jo Anne and Terry spent the morning in the library now they are going to have lunch.

_____ 13. My big cat does not like trips to the veterinarian, but I took him anyway.

_____ 14. Finally, the bell rang, and lunch was served.

_____ 15. Vance could stay near home and go to the local college he could go to a college on the east coast.