



## APSU Writing Center

### Fragments and Run-on Sentences

#### Fragment

Reference: *The LB Brief Handbook* 5th edition, pgs. 285-290.

- A **fragment** occurs when one or more of the key elements of a sentence is missing: subject, verb, or complete idea. It is also known as an **incomplete sentence**.
- A fragment fails to be a sentence because it cannot stand by itself. It does not contain even one independent clause; therefore, the sentence is incomplete.
- **Sentence fragments:**
  - **Example:** Because we left the concert early.
  - **Example:** This pair of shoes too tight.
  - **Example:** Since spring came early.
- One way to determine if a sentence is a fragment or complete is to put the words "I believe that" in front of that sentence or fragment. If it makes sense and is a complete thought, it is a sentence. If the thought doesn't sound right or is incomplete, then it is a fragment.

#### Ways to Correct Fragments:

- **If the fragment gives information that applies to another sentence in the paragraph, join the fragment with that sentence.**
  - **Incorrect:** *Because we left the concert early. We missed the grand finale.*
  - **Correct:** Because we left the concert early, we missed the grand finale
- **Add missing elements or words, or change the form of existing words, to make a complete sentence.**
  - **Incorrect:** *This pair of shoes too tight.*
  - **Correct:** This pair of shoes fits too tightly.
  - **Incorrect:** *Since spring came early.*
  - **Correct:** Since spring came early, the grass grew and I had to mow.
- **Delete words that make the fragment a dependent clause.**
  - **Incorrect:** *Since spring came early.*
  - **Correct:** Spring came early.



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#### Run-on Sentences

Reference: *The LB Brief Handbook* 5 th edition, pgs. 290-297.

- A **run-on**, or **fused sentence**, incorrectly joins two independent clauses with no punctuation, and the reader doesn't know where one thought ends and another begins:
  - **Example:** We left the concert early we missed the grand finale.
  - **Example:** Spring came early the grass grew I had to mow.
- It is important to realize that even short sentences can be run-ons:
  - **Example:** The sun is high, put on some sunblock.
- An extremely long sentence, on the other hand, might be a "run-off-at-the-mouth" sentence but otherwise structurally sound:
  - **Example:** Because we left the concert early we missed the grand finale and I was mad because I missed the big event when my friends wanted to leave early so they could party at the new bar in town.

Run-on sentences typically happen under the following circumstances:

- **When an independent clause gives an order based on what was said in the prior independent clause:**
  - **Example:** This next chapter has a lot of difficult information in it you should start studying right away.
  - **To correct this sentence, we could put a period or semicolon.**
    - **Example:** This next chapter has a lot of difficult information in it. You should start studying right away.
    - **Example:** This next chapter has a lot of difficult information in it; you should start studying right away.
- **When two independent clauses are connected by a transitional expression (conjunctive adverb) such as however, moreover, or nevertheless.**
  - **Example:** *Mr. Nguyen has sent his four children to Ivy League colleges, however, he has sacrificed his health working day and night in that dusty bakery.*
  - **Where that first comma appears, we could have used either a period or a semicolon.**
    - **Example:** Mr. Nguyen has sent his four children to Ivy League colleges. However, he has sacrificed his health working day and night in that dusty bakery.
    - **Example:** Mr. Nguyen has sent his four children to Ivy League colleges; however, he has sacrificed his health working day and night in that dusty bakery.

## Fragments and Run-on Sentences

- When the second of two independent clauses contains a pronoun that connects it to the first independent clause.
  - **Example:** This computer doesn't make sense to me it came without a manual.
- Although these two clauses are brief, and the ideas are closely related, this is a run-on sentence. We need a period.
  - **Example:** *This computer doesn't make sense to me. It came without a manual.*

### Ways to Correct Run-ons:

- **Original run-ons:**
  - **Example:** We left the concert early we missed the grand finale.
  - **Example:** Spring came early the grass grew I had to mow.
- **Make two or three separate sentences by using a period.**
  - We left the concert early. We missed the grand finale.
  - Spring came early. The grass grew. I had to mow.
- **Use a coordinating conjunction—FANBOYS (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)— and a comma if needed.**
  - **Example:** We left the concert early, so we missed the grand finale.
  - **Example:** Spring came early, the grass grew, and I had to mow.
- **Use a subordinating conjunction (because, although, unless, when, if, since...) and/or restructure the sentence.**
  - **Example:** Because we left the concert early, we missed the grand finale
  - **Example:** The grass grew, and I had to mow since spring came early.
- **Use a semicolon and conjunctive adverb—THINTIC (therefore, however, indeed, nevertheless, in fact, consequently).**
  - **Example:** Spring came early; therefore, I had to mow the grass because it grew quickly.
  - **Example:** This pair of shoes fit tightly; consequently, my feet hurt.
- **Place periods at the end of obvious complete clauses and other correct punctuation where short sentences need to be combined.**
  - **Example:** *Because we left the concert early we missed the grand finale and I was mad because I missed the big event when my friends wanted to leave early so they could party at the new bar in town.*
  - **Example:** Because we left the concert early, we missed the grand finale. Therefore, I was angry that I missed the big event because my friends wanted to leave early. They wanted to leave so they could party at the new bar in town.