

## Fragments

If you have seen “S.F.” or “frag” written on your paper, this handout may be helpful. First, it is helpful to define a complete sentence. A sentence is a group of words and phrases that express an idea or several closely related ideas. A sentence can be short or long. As long as you have a subject, a predicate, and a complete thought, you have a complete sentence. A complete sentence is technically called an *independent clause*.

A complete sentence has a subject that tells who or what is being discussed or who or what is performing the action and a verb that is the form of being, performs the action, or links things together in the sentence.

### EXAMPLE:

*Mike sat.*

This short, simple sentence can be expanded to contain more information.

*Mike sat in the dark.*

OR

*Hoping someone would find him in the closet, Mike sat in the dark for hours.*

### Elements of a Complete Sentence

It has a **subject**.

(the actor)

It has a **predicate**.

(verb, form of being, action, what happens in the sentence)

It is a **complete thought**.

(can stand alone and make sense)

### A fragment is an incomplete sentence.

Fragments may lack a subject, verb, or both. They need more information to make them complete. Incomplete sentences (fragments) are sometimes hard to spot, but they have one of these three problems:

1. **No subject, verb only, or a word that looks like a verb:**
  - WRONG: Texting every afternoon for several months.
    - *Who* texts every afternoon?
  - CORRECT: *Jenny* texted every afternoon for several months.
  
2. **No verb, subject only:**
  - WRONG: Cortez and his soldiers on the mountain overlooking the magnificent capital of the Aztecs.
    - What were Cortez and his soldiers doing on the mountain?
  - CORRECT: Cortez and his soldiers *stood* on the mountains overlooking the magnificent capital of the Aztecs.
  
3. **A stand-alone subordinate clause also called a dependent clause fragment:**
  - WRONG: Although my spoken French is very good.
    - The word although, a subordinating conjunction, implies that something else needs to be stated about my spoken French. It is obvious that it is dependent on another idea for its full meaning.
  - CORRECT: Although my spoken French is very good, I wish I spoke as well as a native speaker.

### **Tips for Identifying Fragments:**

1. Read your essay aloud; make sure you are reading according to punctuation.
2. Read your essay from end to beginning starting with the last sentence and ending with the first one.
3. Read each sentence individually. Does it make sense apart from its nearby sentences?
4. Pay attention to punctuation. Know why you are or are not using punctuation marks.