Fixing Fragments

A fragment is part of a sentence that is missing a subject or verb, and it does not express a complete thought. While it is punctuated to look like a complete sentence, a fragment cannot stand on its own.

Here are the distinguishing features of a sentence fragment:

- It is missing a subject
  - Ran to the store faster than a rabbit.  
    - (Missing the subject- who ran?)
- It is missing a verb or has the wrong verb form
  - My favorite history teacher.  
    - (Missing the verb- What did the teacher do or say?)
- It is a leftover phrase
  - For better or worse.  
    - (Leftover phrase- What is it modifying?)
- It is an abandoned clause
  - When my mother married my father.  
    - (Abandoned clause- What happened when “my mother married my father?”)
- It is a misuse of “such as, for example, especially,” etc.
  - For example, my brother was practicing martial arts.  
    - (Misuse of “for example- Did something happen when my brother was practicing martial arts?)

Once you’ve identified what your sentence fragment is missing, fix it using one of these strategies:

Three Ways to Fix a Fragment

1. Attach the fragment to a nearby complete sentence.

   Sometimes a fragment occurs because it’s a leftover of from a previous sentence or it’s an abandoned clause meant to introduce the following sentence.

   Incorrect: I forgot to eat breakfast. On the morning of my driver’s test.
   Correct: I forgot to eat breakfast on the morning of my driver’s test.

   Incorrect: If the front door is locked. Use the back entrance.
   Correct: If the front door is locked, use the back entrance.

2. Revise the fragment by adding whatever is missing – subject, verb, complete thought.

   Incorrect: Loves to lie around in the sun all day. (Subject is missing. Who loves to lie around?)
   Correct: My roommate’s pug loves to lie around in the sun all day.

   Incorrect: Joe to train everyday. (Verb is missing. Also, “to train” is the wrong verb form.)
   Correct: Joe trains everyday for the marathon next month.
Correct: Joe is training everyday for the marathon next month.

3. Rewrite the fragment or the entire passage that contains the fragment.

Incorrect: Our new landlord was expected to make changes. Such as fixing the plumbing, installing a new washer, and replacing the security gate. Has not done any of it yet and weeks have passed.

Correct: Our new landlord was expected to make changes, such as fixing the plumbing, installing a new washer, and replacing the security gate lock. Weeks have passed, and he still has not done any of it yet.