# Fragments

# **What is a sentence fragment?**

A complete sentence, or independent clause, contains at least one subject followed by the main verb. “Victor realized he needed to sneeze” is an example of an independent clause. “Victor” is the subject of the sentence and “realized” is the main verb connected to the subject. A fragment is an incomplete thought that can be dependent on another independent clause. A fragment could also be missing the subject or the main verb. There are three common ways a fragment can occur: Adding a dependent word, using the incorrect verb tense, or not including the subject or verb.

**Dependent word:** After I stopped drinking coffee. I began sleeping better at night.

What happens after the writer stopped drinking coffee? The underlined clause is a fragment because of the dependent word, “After,” which indicates that there is more to the clause. It is dependent on the next clause, “I began sleeping better at night,” to make sense.

**Solution:** Replace the period with a comma to join the clauses together making the connection between the dependent clause and the independent clause clear to the reader.

* After I stopped drinking coffee, I began sleeping better at night.

**Incorrect verb tense:** I spent all day in the employment office. Trying to find a job.

Who is trying to find a job? The underlined clause is a fragment because it lack the appropriate verb. When starting a sentence with the “-ing” form of a verb, it becomes a gerund, which is a noun and cannot be the main verb. Remember, the subject should come before the main verb.

**Solution:** Remove the period to join the two clauses. Be aware of the clause order. If the dependent clause come first there may be a need for punctuation; if the independent clause comes first, there may not be a need for punctuation.

* I spent all day in the employment office trying to find a job.

**Missing the subject:** I saw the puppies for sale. Wanted one.

Who wanted one? The underlined clause is a fragment because it does not contain a subject. Without a subject, the clause is dependent on the first clause that has both a subject and a verb.

**Solution**: Simply removing the punctuation will not work for this. Instead, add the subject “I” to the fragment, or replace the comma with a coordinating conjunction (FANBOY) like “and.”

* I saw the puppies for sale and wanted one.
* I saw the puppies for sale. I wanted one.

**Practice for identifying and fixing fragments is on the reverse side of this handout.**

# Exercises

**Identify what is missing from each clause by writing the appropriate letter next to the sentence. Subject=S, Verb=V, Independent clause= I**

1. Barked at the cat.
2. When everything went wrong.
3. They didn’t creatively.
4. Because of the roaring fire.
5. Ate all the food in the fridge.

**Rewrite the following sentence to correct the fragment.**

1. If I wanted to go to the movies. I have to finish my homework.
2. The bus driver slammed on his breaks. Worried he would miss his stop.
3. Josh went to the store. Bought chocolate.
4. As Sam climbed the wall. He wondered if it was safe.
5. He thought about getting a snack. Because he was still a little hungry.