

42. IDENTIFYING AND CORRECTING FRAGMENTS

A fragment is an incomplete sentence.

You can easily identify and correct fragments:

A sentence is a fragment if...	Fragment	To correct the fragment...	Corrected fragment	Remember
It is missing a subject.	<i>Is important to determine what skills you have when looking for a job.</i> <i>By working extra hard enabled him to improve his grades.</i>	Add a subject.	<i><u>It</u> is important to determine what skills you have when looking for a job.</i> <i><u>Working extra hard</u> enabled him to improve his grades.</i>	Every sentence needs a subject. A subject is always a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase (a group of words that can be replaced with a pronoun). A prepositional phrase cannot be a subject.
It is missing any verb.	<i>A three-year-old child alone in the park.</i>	Add a complete verb.	<i>A three-year-old child <u>was</u> alone in the park.</i>	Every sentence needs a complete verb.
It is missing a helping verb.	<i>The child born in the United States.</i>	Add a helping verb.	<i>The child <u>was</u> <u>born</u> in the United States.</i>	Verbs in the simple present (e.g., <i>cause</i>) or simple past (e.g., <i>caused</i>) are complete with just one verb. All other tenses (e.g., <i>had caused</i> , <i>have caused</i> , <i>was causing</i> , <i>is causing</i> , <i>will cause</i> , etc.) and the passive voice (e.g., <i>is caused</i>) need a main verb and a helping verb to be complete.
It is an incomplete idea because it is only a dependent clause.	<i>The trial was postponed.</i> <i>Because the expert witness had lied under oath.</i> <i>The jury didn't agree with him. Even though he had the best arguments.</i>	Connect the dependent clause to a complete sentence.	<i>The trial was <u>postponed because the expert witness had lied under oath.</u></i> <i>The jury didn't agree with <u>him even though he had the best arguments.</u></i>	A sentence with a subject and a complete verb can still be a fragment because it does not express a complete thought. Putting <i>although</i> , <i>before</i> , <i>because</i> , or any other subordinating conjunction in front of a sentence makes that sentence a dependent clause or a fragment that needs to be combined with a complete sentence to be complete.