**Reviewing sentence effectiveness**

1. **Sentence Fragments**

A fragment is a phrase or a dependent clause that is punctuated as if it is a complete sentence, beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period. A complete sentence must have a subject and a verb and express a complete thought. A fragment is missing one or both of these. Fragments are not necessarily short. So just because a group of words is long, do not assume that it is a complete sentence. Make sure it has both a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought.

Examples :

* And for several hours worked on the car.  (Lacks subject.)
* Running down the street.  (Lacks subject and complete verb.)
* Although he wouldn't do it.  (Begins with a subordinating conjunction.)

(1) The ball over the fence. *(This group of words is missing a verb.)*

The ball went over the fence.

(2) Mary baking a cake from scratch. *(The ing-form of bake, baking, needs a helping verb in order to make the idea complete; therefore, the verb in this sentence is incomplete.)*

Mary is baking a cake from scratch.

**2.Parallelism**

Parallelism is used to make all ideas in a sentence parallel or equal in structure. In other words, the same grammatical form is used for each idea. Each idea may be a noun, a verb in the same tense, an adjective, a prepositional phrase, etc. Parallel sentences are much smoother and easier to read than nonparallel sentences.

Examples:

(1) Paul washed the car, groomed the dog, and was mowing the lawn all in the same day.

Rewritten:

Paul washed the car, groomed the dog, and mowed the lawn all in the same day.

*(This sentence is parallel: each verb is in the past tense form. It is much easier to read.)*

(2) Sarah wanted to study accounting, draw some pictures, and look into becoming a nurse while she was in college.

Rewritten:

Sarah wanted to study accounting, art, and nursing while she was in college.

*(This sentence is parallel: the simple noun form of each college subject is used. It is much easier to read.)*

**3.Run-ons :run-on sentences**

Run-ons, comma splices, and fused sentences are all names given to compound sentences that are not punctuated correctly. A fused sentence consists of two independent clauses run together and punctuated as one sentence:

* I thought the paper was due tomorrow nobody told me it was due today.  (Period or semicolon required after "tomorrow.")

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are separated by only a comma:

I didn't know which job I wanted, I was too confused to decide.

I didn't know which job I wanted, and I was too confused to decide.

### Four Ways of Correcting Run-on Sentences:

1. **Run-on Sentences:**
   * Adam is a sweet boy he really loves animals.
   * Adam is a sweet boy, he really loves animals.

To correct a run-on sentence, make it into two [simple sentences](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/simpsenterm.htm). Put a period at the end of the first subject and verb group. Start the second sentence with a [capital letter](http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/capletters.htm). (semicolon can also be used)

Correct Sentences:  
Adam is a sweet boy. He really loves animals.

Sometimes two sentences are very closely related in meaning and full [end-stop punctuation](http://grammar.about.com/od/basicmarks/a/end_marks.htm) may seem too strong. A [semicolon](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/semicolonterm.htm) can then be used to divide the two sentences. . . .

1. A **run-on sentence** can sometimes be prevented by using a [comma](http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/commaterm.htm) and joining word ([coordinate conjunction](http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/coordconjterm.htm)) to join sentences together.

*Wrong:* John went to the movies *x* Sue stayed home.  
*Correct:* John went to the movies, and Sue stayed home.

1. "[Another way to correct a run-on sentence is to] change the **run-on** to a [complex sentence](http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/complexsentence.htm) by placing a [subordinating conjunction](http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/subordconj.htm) before one of the clauses:

*Run-on*: I don't play tennis well I have a poor backhand.  
*Correct:* I don't play tennis well *because* I have a poor backhand.

* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_;\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; however,\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.Comma Splice**

A comma splice occurs when two complete sentences have a comma between them. A comma is not strong enough to stand alone as sufficient punctuation between two complete *sentences (a complete sentence contains both a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought).* There are four basic ways to correct a comma splice:

Put a period between the two complete sentences, making sure that the first letter of each complete sentence is capitalized.

Use a comma **PLUS** an appropriate coordinating conjunction, such as **for, and, nor, but, or, yet,** or **so** between the two sentences.

**Coordination**

Coordination is used to join two closely related sentences that are equal in importance. One way to join two closely related sentences is to put a semicolon between them. Another way is to use a comma and a coordinating conjunction between the two sentences. The seven coordinating conjunctions are **for, and, nor, but, or, yet**, and **so**.

Examples:

(1) Harold felt pressured to score. His team was just one point away from victory.

Rewritten:

Harold felt pressured to score**;** his team was just one point away from victory.

*(This was rewritten using a semicolon between the complete sentences)*

(2) Barbara wanted to make her friend’s birthday party special. She ordered balloons.

Rewritten: Barbara wanted to make her friend’s birthday party special, so she ordered balloons.

*(This was rewritten using a comma and a coordinating conjunction.)*

Use a subordinating conjunction, such as **when, while, after, unless, even if, etc.** to turn either the first part or the second part into a dependent clause. If the dependent clause is the first part, put a comma after the **entire** dependent clause. If the dependent clause is in the second part, no comma is needed.

**Subordination**

Subordination allows a writer to combine ideas to demonstrate the relationship of one idea to another. When using subordination, place the key idea of the sentence in the independent clause and the less important idea in the subordinate clause. Notice how the construction of complex sentences with subordination can eliminate short, choppy sentences. The subordinate clauses are italicized in the revisions.

1. The novel is very powerful. It concerns the rights of women in the twentieth century.

**Revision:** The novel, *which concerns the rights of women in the twentieth century,* is very powerful.

2. The writer comes up with many ideas about his or her topic. He or she organizes these

ideas into a paper.

**Revision:** *After coming up with many ideas about the topic,* the writer organizes

them into a paper.

3. The changes in education included a change in curriculum. The changes had a drastic

effect on the thinking of the Turkish villagers.

**Revision:** The changes in education, *which included a change in curriculum,* had

a drastic effect on the thinking of the Turkish villagers.

Use a semicolon between the two complete sentences. This is especially effective if the two sentences are closely related.

**5. Subject-Verb Agreement**

Singular subjects need singular verbs, and plural subjects need plural verbs because both must agree in number. Singular verbs in the present tense end in “s” or “es.” Usually in English the subject comes first and then the verb, but in many direct questions and when “here” or “there” begins the sentence, the verb comes first in the sentence. Prepositional phrases that follow the subject can be troublesome for students. Nothing in the prepositional phrase can be the subject of the sentence. Always eliminate prepositional phrases first, and then find the subject and verb.

Examples:

Everyone in our company (plans, plan) to go to the company picnic on Saturday.

*Delete the prepositional phrase “in our company.” Find the subject “Everyone,” which is singular. Choose the singular verb “plans” to agree with the singular subject.*

Here (is, are) the announcers for the local charity benefit taking place today.

*(“Announcers” is the subject; choose the plural verb “are” to agree in number with the plural subject “announcers.” “Here” is never a subject.*

Placing subjects close to their verbs reduces subject-verb agreement errors. If the subject of a sentence is singular, the verb must be singular; if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural. Subjects and verbs are italicized in the following sentences.

1. *Each* of the female characters, as well as the male characters they interact with, *seem* to have difficulty with the transition from traditional to modern values.

**Revision:** *Each* of the female characters, as well as the male characters they interact with, *seems* to have difficulty with the transition from traditional to modern values.

2. There *is* three *reasons* for the government's reaction.

**Revision:** There *are* three *reasons* for the government's reaction.

3. The poetic *devices and constructs* that help to reinforce the effects of the imagery *is*

the final topic of discussion.

**Revision:** The *poetic devices and constructs* that help to reinforce the effects of

the imagery *are* the final topic of discussion.

**6.Unclear Pronoun Reference**

Always make clear to whom or to what pronouns refer. In addition, be sure that pronouns and their antecedents agree in number and gender. The unclear pronouns are italicized in the following examples.

1. To keep the birds from eating seeds, soak *them* in blue food coloring.

**Revision:** Soak the seeds in blue food coloring to keep the birds from eating

them.1

2. Writers should spend a great deal of time thinking about their arguments to make sure

*they* are not superficial.

**Revision:** Writers should spend a great deal of time thinking about their arguments to make sure that those arguments are not superficial.

3. Our lab group originally determined dominance on the basis of *its* fins.

**Revision:** Our lab group originally determined the fish's dominance on the basis of its fins.