

Sentence Fragments

A complete sentence must have (at least) a subject and a verb. It must also express a complete thought.

A sentence fragment just a *piece* of a sentence. In other words, it is either missing a subject or a verb, or it does not express a complete thought.

e.g. For instance, the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.
[missing verb, not a complete thought]

e.g. Which is the first stage of sleep.
[missing subject, not a complete thought]

e.g. Even though they perform the similar tasks.
[not a complete thought]

To fix these errors, you need to add what's missing. Often, fragments are dependent clauses that need independent clauses in order to be complete. (See the *Clauses* and *Types of Sentences* handouts for more information.)

e.g. For instance, the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms protects the rights of minority groups in Canada.

e.g. Light sleep, which is the first stage of sleep, lasts between 5-10 minutes.

e.g. Even though they perform the similar tasks, women are often paid 15%-25% less than men in managerial positions.

Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences occur when you stick two sentences together, back-to-back, without any punctuation or connecting words. In the examples below, one sentence runs right into the next.

e.g. Children aren't born with social morals they develop them over time.

e.g. The weather was poor schools were closed.

Comma Splices

Comma splices are like run-on sentences; however, they have commas between the two sentences.

e.g. Cod stocks declined, the fishing industry finally collapsed in the late '90s.

e.g. Half of the senate voted against the bill, the other half voted in favour of it.

A comma is NOT enough to join two sentences together.

To fix run-on sentences and comma splices, do one of the following:

- use a period
- use a semi-colon (if the sentences are closely related)
- use a comma + *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*
- use a semi-colon + *however, therefore, for example, as a result, etc.* + a comma

e.g. Half of the senators voted against the bill. The other half voted in favour of it.

e.g. Half of the senators voted against the bill; the other half voted in favour of it.

e.g. Half of the senators voted against the bill, and the other half voted in favour of it.

e.g. Half of the senators voted against the bill; however, the other half voted in favour of it.

Practice Exercises

Decide whether the sentence is a fragment (F), a run-on sentence (RO), or a comma splice (CS). Then fix the sentence any way you can.

- ___ 1. Toronto is the financial centre of Canada, it is home to the head offices of the country's five major banks.
- ___ 2. Since there were no restrictions on the trade of subprime mortgages.
- ___ 3. Tardigrades are micro-animals they can survive extreme temperatures, high doses of radiation, and decades without food or water.
- ___ 4. First he tried to secure financing through legitimate means, then he was turned down for a loan, he turned to crime.
- ___ 5. Along with normal signs of ageing, such as reduced ability to hear high-frequency sounds, loss in bone density, and a slower metabolism.
- ___ 6. The Crimean War led to an 11-month siege also there were heavy casualties for the British in the Charge of the Light Brigade.

Answer Key

1. CS 2. F 3. RO 4. CS 5. F 6. RO