**What are Sentence Fragments?**

Every sentence must have a subject and a verb and must express a complete thought. A word group that lacks a subject or a verb and that does not express a complete thought is a fragment. The most common types of fragments are described below.

**1. Dependent-word fragments.** Some word groups that begin with a dependent word are fragments.

After I learned the price of new cars. I decided to keep my old Buick.

In most cases you can correct a dependent-word fragment by attaching it to the sentence that comes after it or the sentence that comes before it:

After I learned the price of new cars, I decided to keep my old Buick.

Another way of correcting a dependent-word fragment is simply to eliminate the dependent word by rewriting the sentence:

I learned the price of new cars and decided to keep my old Buick.

**Activity:**

A. Whenever our front and back doors are open. The air current causes the back door to slam shut. The noise makes everyone jump.

B. Bill always turns on the radio in the morning to hear the news. He wants to be sure that World War III has not started. Before he gets on with his day.

**2.** *-****Ing* and *to* Fragments.** When an *ing* word appears at or near the start of a word group, a fragment may result. Such fragments often lack a subject and part of the verb.

I spent almost two hours on the phone yesterday. Trying to find a garage to repair my car. Eventually, I had to have it towed to a garage in another town.

To correct an *-ing* fragment:

A. Attach it to the sentence that comes before it or the sentence that comes after it, whichever makes sense. This works with *to* fragments, also.

I spent two hours on the phone yesterday, trying to find a garage to repair my car.

B. Add a subject and change the *-ing* verb part to the correct form of the verb:

I spent almost two hours on the phone yesterday. I was trying to find a garage to repair my car.

C. Change *being* to the correct form of the verb *be (am, are, is, was, were)*:

He looked forward to the study period at school. It being the only time he could sit unbothered and dream about his future.

He looked forward to the study period at school. It was the only time he could sit unbothered and dream about his future.

**Activity:**

A. A mysterious package arrived on my porch yesterday. Bearing no return address. I half expected to find a bomb inside.

B. Jack bundled up and went outside on the bitterly cold day. To saw wood for his fireplace. He returned half frozen with only two logs.

**3. Added-detail fragments.** Added-detail fragments lack a subject and a verb. They often begin with *also, except, including, especially, for example and such as*.

The class often starts late. For example, yesterday at quarter after nine instead of nine sharp. Today the class started at five after nine.

To correct added-detail fragments:

A. Attach the fragment to the complete thought that

precedes it:

I love to cook and eat Italian food. Especially spaghetti and lasagna. I make everything from scratch.

I love to cook and eat Italian food, especially spaghetti and lasagna.

B. Add a subject and a verb to the fragment to make a complete sentence:

The class often starts late. For example, yesterday it began at a quarter after nine instead of nine sharp.

C. Change words as necessary to make the fragment part of the preceding sentence.

He failed a number of courses before he earned his degree. Among them, English I, Economics, and General Biology.

Among the courses he failed before he earned his degree were English I, Economics, and General Biology.

**Activity:**

A. It’s always hard for me to get up for work. Especially on Mondays after a holiday weekend. However, I always wake up early on free days.

B. Tony has enormous endurance. For example, the ability to run five miles in the morning and then play basketball all afternoon.

**4. Missing-subject fragments.** People write missing-subject fragments because they think the subject in one sentence will apply to the next word group as well. But the subject, as well as the verb, must be in each sentence.

The truck skidded on the rain-slick highway. But missed a telephone pole on the side of the road.

Correct missing-subject fragments by: 1) attaching the fragment to the preceding sentence; or by 2) adding a subject to the sentence.

The truck skidded on the rain-slick highway but missed a telephone pole on the other side of the road.

**Activity:**

I tried on an old suit hanging in our basement closet. And discovered, to my surprise, that it was too tight.