

Fragments

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Definition of a Fragment

Fragments are partial--or incomplete--sentences. Fragments are often used in conversation, but they usually should be revised in written communication. Two exceptions are:

1. A fragment can occasionally be used to emphasize an idea.
2. Fragments sometimes can be effectively used in dialogue.

How to Find Fragments

1. Many people can find fragments by reading a paragraph or an essay backwards. (The last sentence should be read first, the second to last sentence should be read second, etc.)
2. Fragments can also be found by looking for different types of fragments:
 - a. A missing subject or a missing verb will result in a fragment:
My car—an engine, a radio, a muffler, and four tires.
 - b. Phrases can make a sentence look long, but both a subject and a correct verb form are needed for a complete sentence:
My car, sitting in the garage with the lawnmower and the tools—an engine, a radio, a muffler, and four tires.
 - c. A subordinate clause by itself (without an additional independent clause) is a fragment:
Although my car had an engine, a radio, a muffler, and four tires.
 - d. A fragment may result when conjunctive adverbs or transitional phrases--by themselves and without a subject or a verb--are used to express added detail:
For example: an engine, a radio, a muffler, and four tires.

How to Revise Fragments

1. Missing words can be added to a fragment:
My car had an engine, a radio, a muffler, and four tires.
2. A fragment can be attached to a nearby sentence:
Although my car had an engine, a radio, a muffler, and four tires, it still did not run.
3. A fragment can be restructured in other ways:
My car had many interesting parts; for example, it had an engine, a radio, a muffler, and four tires.

Websites with Practice Quizzes

Capital Community College: <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar> Learning:

Grammar Bytes: <http://www.chompchomp.com/exercises.htm>

The OWL's Online Writing Lab at Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>