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SOLVING
COMMON
SENTENCE
PROBLEMS

22 A

A Recognizing Fragments

A **sentence fragment** is an incomplete sentence. Every sentence must include at least one subject and one verb, and every sentence must express a complete thought. If a group of words does not do *all* these things, it is a fragment and not a sentence—even if it begins with a capital letter and ends with a period.

The following is a complete sentence.

SENTENCE The actors in the play were very talented. (includes both a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought)

Because a sentence must have both a subject and a verb and express a complete thought, the following groups of words are not complete sentences; they are fragments.

- FRAGMENT (NO VERB) The actors in the play. (What point is being made about the actors?)
- FRAGMENT (NO SUBJECT) Were very talented. (Who were very talented?)
- FRAGMENT (NO SUBJECT OR VERB) Very talented. (Who was very talented?)
- FRAGMENT (DOES NOT EXPRESS COMPLETE THOUGHT) Because the actors in the play were very talented. (What happened because they were very talented?)

FOCUS Identifying Fragments

Sentence fragments almost always appear next to complete sentences.

_____ COMPLETE SENTENCE _____, _____ FRAGMENT _____
Celia took two electives. Physics 320 and Spanish 101.

The fragment above does not have a subject or a verb. The complete sentence that comes before it, however, has both a subject (*Celia*) and a verb (*took*).

Often, you can correct a sentence fragment by attaching it to a nearby sentence that supplies the missing words.

Celia took two electives, Physics 320 and Spanish 101.

◆ PRACTICE 22-1

Some of the following items are fragments, and others are complete sentences. On the line following each item, write *F* if it is a fragment and *S* if it is a complete sentence.

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Sentence Fragments

Example: Star formations in the night sky. F

1. To save as much as possible for retirement. _____
2. The judge gave her a two-year sentence. _____
3. A birthday on Christmas Day. _____
4. Because he lost ten pounds on his new diet. _____
5. Working in the garden and fixing the roof. _____
6. Sonya flew to Mexico. _____
7. Starts in August in many parts of the country. _____
8. And slept in his own bed last night. _____
9. Famous for her movie roles. _____
10. A phone that plays music and takes photos. _____

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◆ PRACTICE 22-2

In the following passage, some of the numbered groups of words are missing a subject, a verb, or both. Identify each fragment by labeling it *F*. Then, decide how each fragment could be attached to another word group to create a complete new sentence. Finally, rewrite the entire passage, using complete sentences, on the lines provided.

Example: Martha Grimes, Ruth Rendell, and Deborah Crombie write detective novels. _____ Set in England. F

Rewrite: Martha Grimes, Ruth Rendell, and Deborah Crombie write detective novels set in England.

(1) Sara Paretsky writes detective novels. _____ (2) Such as *Burn Marks* and *Guardian Angel*. _____ (3) These novels are about V. I. Warshawski. _____ (4) A private detective. _____ (5) V. I. lives and works in Chicago. _____ (6) The Windy City. _____ (7) Every day as a detective. _____ (8) V. I. takes risks. _____ (9) V. I. is tough. _____ (10) She is also a woman. _____

Rewrite:

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PROBLEMS

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◆ PRACTICE 22-3

In the following paragraph, some of the numbered groups of words are missing a subject, a verb, or both. First, underline each fragment. Then, decide how each fragment could be attached to a nearby word group to create a complete new sentence. Finally, rewrite the entire paragraph, using complete sentences, on the lines provided.

Example: Gatorade was invented at the University of Florida. To help the Florida Gators fight dehydration.

Rewrite: Gatorade was invented at the University of Florida to help the Florida Gators fight dehydration.

(1) Doctors discovered that football players were losing electrolytes and carbohydrates. (2) Through their sweat. (3) They invented a drink. (4) That replaced these important elements. (5) Gatorade tasted terrible. (6) But did its job. (7) The Florida Gators survived a very hot season. (8) And won most of their games. (9) Now, Gatorade is used by many college and professional football teams. (10) As well as in baseball, basketball, tennis, golf, and soccer.

Rewrite:

■ WRITING FIRST: Flashback

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 347. Do all your sentences seem complete? If you think any are not complete, copy them on the lines below.

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5. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States were rivals. But never actually fought a war with each other.

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6. Scooters have been around for many years. And have recently become popular again.

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7. With cosmetic surgery, people can look younger. And feel younger, too.

8. Online shopping sites sometimes offer free shipping. Or have lower prices than local stores.

9. Pro football linemen can weigh more than 300 pounds. But are still able to run fast.

10. Using an electric toothbrush can be good for one's teeth. And promote healthy gums.

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WRITING FIRST: Flashback

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 347. Does every word group that is punctuated as a sentence include a subject? On the lines below, correct any missing-subject fragments you find.

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22 C

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Sentence
Fragments

C Phrase Fragments

Every sentence must include a subject and a verb. A **phrase** is a group of words that is missing a subject or a verb or both. When you punctuate a phrase as if it is a sentence, you create a fragment. You can usually correct a phrase fragment in your writing by attaching it to the sentence that comes directly before it.

An **appositive** identifies, renames, or describes a noun or a pronoun. An appositive phrase cannot stand alone as a sentence. To correct an appositive fragment, attach it to the sentence containing the nouns or pronouns that the appositive identifies.

INCORRECT He decorated the room in his favorite colors. ^{FRAGMENT} Brown and black.

CORRECT He decorated the room in his favorite colors, brown and black.

Sometimes a word or expression like *including*, *such as*, *for example*, or *for instance* introduces an appositive. Even if an appositive phrase is introduced by one of these expressions, it is still a fragment.

INCORRECT A balanced diet should include high-fiber foods. ^{FRAGMENT} Such as leafy vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole-grain bread.

CORRECT A balanced diet should include high-fiber foods, such as leafy vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole-grain bread.

A **prepositional phrase** consists of a preposition and its object. A prepositional phrase cannot stand alone as a sentence. To correct a prepositional phrase fragment, attach it to the sentence that comes directly before it.

INCORRECT She promised to stand by him. ^{FRAGMENT} In sickness and in health.

CORRECT She promised to stand by him in sickness and in health.

An **infinitive** consists of *to* plus the base form of the verb (*to be*, *to go*, *to write*). An infinitive phrase (*to be free*, *to go home*, *to write a novel*) cannot stand alone as a sentence. You can usually correct an infinitive phrase fragment by attaching it to the sentence that comes directly before it.

INCORRECT Eric considered dropping out of school. ^{FRAGMENT} To start his own business.

CORRECT Eric considered dropping out of school to start his own business.

ON THE WEB

Visit *Exercise Central* at bedfordstmartins.com/writingfirst for more practice.

■ Culture Clue

The most famous infinitive phrase comes from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*: "To be or not to be, that is the question."

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SOLVING COMMON SENTENCE PROBLEMS

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You can also add the words necessary to complete the sentence.

CORRECT Eric considered dropping out of school. He wanted to start his own business.

◆ PRACTICE 22-5

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In the following paragraph, some of the numbered groups of words are phrase fragments. First, identify each fragment by labeling it F. Then, decide how each fragment could be attached to an adjacent sentence to create a complete new sentence. Finally, rewrite the entire paragraph, using complete sentences, on the lines provided.

▶ Word Power adjacent next to

Example: A maze is a type of puzzle in which a person has to find his or her way. Through a complicated route.

Rewrite: A maze is a type of puzzle in which a person has to find his or her way through a complicated route.

(1) Mazes have been constructed out of paving stones, cornfields, and rooms. (2) Connected by doors. (3) Printed mazes can be solved with a pen or pencil. (4) During the 1970s, many books and magazines published printed mazes. (5) For children and adults. (6) There are no foolproof ways to escape. (7) From a maze. (8) One strategy is to keep turning to either the right or the left. (9) To keep from getting lost. (10) Mazes can be fun to explore. (11) On foot or on paper.

Rewrite:

Blank lines for rewriting the paragraph.

◆ PRACTICE 22-6

In the following paragraph, some of the numbered groups of words are phrase fragments. First, underline each fragment. Then, decide how each fragment could be attached to an adjacent sentence to create a complete new sentence. Finally, rewrite the entire paragraph, using complete sentences, on the lines provided.

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Sentence
Fragments

Example

Nurses' uniforms have changed a lot. Over the years.

Rewrite: Nurses' uniforms have changed a lot over the years.

(1) Originally, nurses' uniforms looked like nuns' habits because nuns used to take care. (2) Of sick people. (3) In the late 1800s, a student of Florence Nightingale created a brown uniform. (4) With a white apron and cap. (5) This uniform was worn by student nurses at her school. (6) The Florence Nightingale School of Nursing and Midwifery. (7) Eventually, nurses began to wear white uniforms, white stockings, white shoes, and starched white caps. (8) To stress the importance of cleanliness. (9) Many older people remember these uniforms. (10) With affection. (11) Today, most nurses wear bright, comfortable scrubs. (12) To help patients (especially children) feel more at ease.

Rewrite:

◆ PRACTICE 22-7

Each of the following items is a phrase fragment, not a sentence. Correct each fragment by adding any words needed to turn the fragment into a complete sentence. (You may add words before or after the fragment.)

Example: During World War I. A flu epidemic killed millions of people
during World War I. or During World War I, a flu epidemic killed millions of
people.

1. To be the best player on the team. _____

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- 2. From a developing nation in Africa. _____

- 3. Such as tulips or roses. _____

- 4. Behind door number 3. _____

- 5. Including my parents and grandparents. _____

- 6. With a new car in the driveway. _____

- 7. To make a difficult career decision. _____

- 8. For a long time. _____

- 9. Turkey, stuffing, potatoes, and cranberry sauce. _____

- 10. In less than a year. _____

■ **WRITING FIRST: Flashback**

Look back at your response to the Writing First activity on page 347. Are any phrases incorrectly punctuated as sentences? On the lines below, correct each phrase fragment you find. (Hint: In most cases, you will be able to attach the fragment to the sentence that comes right before it.)

D **-ing Fragments**

Every sentence must include a subject and a verb. If the verb is incomplete, a word group is a fragment, not a sentence.

An *-ing* verb cannot be a complete verb. It needs a **helping verb** to complete it. An *-ing* verb, such as *looking*, cannot stand alone in a sentence

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without a helping verb (*is looking, was looking, were looking,* and so on). When you use an *-ing* verb without a helping verb, you create a fragment.

INCORRECT The twins are full of mischief. Always looking for trouble.

One way to correct an *-ing* fragment is to attach it to the sentence that comes right before it.

CORRECT The twins are full of mischief, always looking for trouble.

Another way to correct an *-ing* fragment is to add a subject and a helping verb.

CORRECT The twins are full of mischief. They are always looking for trouble.

FOCUS Being

The *-ing* verb *being* is often used incorrectly as if it were a complete verb.

INCORRECT I decided to take a nap. The outcome being that I slept through calculus class.

To correct this kind of fragment, substitute a form of the verb *be* that can serve as the main verb in a sentence—for example, *is, was, are,* or *were*.

CORRECT I decided to take a nap. The outcome was that I slept through calculus class.

◆ PRACTICE 22-8

Each of the following items includes an *-ing* fragment. In each case, correct the fragment by attaching it to the sentence before it.

Example: Certain tips can help grocery shoppers. Saving them a lot of money.

Certain tips can help grocery shoppers, saving them a lot of money.

1. Always try to find a store brand. Costing less than the well-known and widely advertised brands.
