Sentence Fragments, Run-on Sentences, and Comma Splices

Sentence Fragments

A sentence fragment is a portion of a sentence punctuated as a sentence.

A sentence fragment often lacks a subject, a verb, or both.

Fragment: Walked toward the street. [lacks subject]  
Revised: He walked toward the street.

Fragment: The telephone with two outside lines. [lacks verb]  
Revised: The telephone has two outside lines.

Fragment: A new television. [lacks both a verb and a subject]  
Revised: Susan purchased a new television.

A sentence fragment is a subordinate clause not attached to a complete sentence.

Fragment: Since I enrolled at Tulsa Community College.  
Revised: Since I enrolled at Tulsa Community College, I have declared a major.

Three Tests to Check for Sentence Fragments

- Is there a verb in the group of words?

  Fragment: The office building at the end of the street.  
  Revised: The office building was built at the end of the street.

- Is there a subject in the group of words?

  Fragment: Accepted the job with enthusiasm.  
  Revised: Sam accepted the job with enthusiasm.

- Does the group of words start with a subordinating term and lack an independent clause?

  Fragment: As Jane left the house.  
  Revised: As Jane left the house, it began to snow.

Look for the following subordination words: after, although, as, because, before, even, though, if, once, since, so that, unless, until, when, whenever, where, whether, while
Run-on Sentences

A run-on sentence consists of two complete sentences not separated by punctuation. (Remember, a complete sentence has both a subject and a verb.)

To revise, insert a period, semicolon, or a comma with a coordinating conjunction.

**Run-on:** I tried to feed my pet gorilla a tortilla he refused my treat.

**Revisions:** I tried to feed my pet gorilla a tortilla. He refused my treat. [period inserted]

I tried to feed my pet gorilla a tortilla; he refused my treat. [semicolon inserted]

I tried to feed my pet gorilla a tortilla, but he refused my treat. [coordinating conjunction inserted]

Common coordinating conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS)*

Comma Splices

Comma splices consist of two complete sentences that are improperly connected by a comma. To revise, replace the comma with a period, semicolon, a comma with a coordinating conjunction, or a subordinating conjunction.

**Comma Splice:** I like pizza with anchovies, he likes pizza with pineapple.

**Revisions:** I like pizza with anchovies. He likes pizza with pineapple. [period inserted]

I like pizza with anchovies; he likes pizza with pineapple. [semicolon inserted]

I like pizza with anchovies, but he likes pizza with pineapple [coordinating conjunction inserted]

I like pizza with anchovies while he likes pizza with pineapple. [or]

While I like pizza with anchovies, he likes pizza with pineapple. [subordinate conjunction inserted]

Common subordinating conjunctions: *after, although, as, because, before, even, though, if, once, since, so that, unless, until, when, whenever, where, whether, while*