


# Sentence Fragments

## Definition

A **SENTENCE FRAGMENT** fails to be a sentence in the sense that it cannot stand by itself. It does not contain even one **independent clause**. There are several reasons why a group of words may seem to act like a sentence but not have the wherewithal to make it as a complete thought.

 **It may locate something in time and place with a prepositional phrase or a series of such phrases, but it's still lacking a proper subject-verb relationship within an independent clause:**


*In Japan, during the last war and just before the armistice.*

This sentence accomplishes a great deal in terms of placing the reader in time and place, but there is no subject, no verb.

 **It describes something, but there is no subject-verb relationship:**


*Working far into the night in an effort to salvage her little boat.*

This is a **verbal phrase** that wants to modify something, the real subject of the sentence (about to come up), probably the *she* who was working so hard.

 **It may have most of the makings of a sentence but still be missing an important part of a verb string:**

*Some of the students working in Professor Espinoza's laboratory last semester.*

Remember that an *-ing* verb form without an auxiliary form to accompany it can never be a verb.

 **It may even have a subject-verb relationship, but it has been subordinated to another idea by a dependent word and so cannot stand by itself:**

*Even though he had the better arguments and was by far the more powerful speaker.*

This sentence fragment has a subject, *he*, and two verbs, *had* and *was*, but it cannot stand by itself because of the dependent word (subordinating conjunction) *even though*. We need an independent clause to follow up this **dependent clause**: . . . *the more powerful speaker, he lost the case because he didn't understand the jury.*

## Stylistic Fragments

There are occasions when a sentence fragment can be stylistically effective, exactly what you want and no more.

Harrison Ford has said he would be more than willing to take on another Indiana Jones project. In a New York minute.

As long as you are clearly in control of the situation, this is permissible, but the freedom to exercise this stylistic license depends on the circumstances. Perhaps your final research paper in English Composition is not the place to experiment -- or, then again, maybe it is. Ask your instructor.

Online Practice:

Exercise 1: <http://www.chompchomp.com/frag01/frag01.htm>

Exercise 2: <http://www.chompchomp.com/frag02/frag02.htm>

Exercise 3: <http://www.chompchomp.com/frag03/frag03.htm>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Hour \_\_\_\_\_

**Sentence Fragments: Worksheet B**

**Directions:** Fix and rewrite the sentence fragments to make a correct sentence.

1. Everyone stayed in the basement. Until the tornado warning ended.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Although the sign said "No Parking." A rude driver parked there.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. I'll never be ready for the test tomorrow. Even if I study all night.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. They are easily scratched. Because pearls are quite soft.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. I wasn't able to sleep. Until I found out how the book ended.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. People at the movie house screamed. When the monster appeared.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Mack missed it by seconds. After running a block to catch the bus.

\_\_\_\_\_

8. We all have a few pet peeves. Which especially irritate us.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. You won't enjoy dinner. Unless you like burned chicken and soggy beans.

\_\_\_\_\_

10. If the weather is bad tomorrow. We'll have to reschedule the reunion.

\_\_\_\_\_

11. When the huge dog rushed up to him. Troy almost stopped breathing.

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Our car is making a chugging noise. That sounds ominous.

\_\_\_\_\_

13. Young elephants stay with their mothers. Until they are about sixteen years old.

\_\_\_\_\_

14. A crowd showed up to meet the author. Who has written a best-selling novel at the age of nineteen.

\_\_\_\_\_

15. Before the "computer revolution" took place. None of these things would have been possible

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Sentence Fragments Practice

Of the three sentences in each group, select the one that is NOT a sentence fragment.

**1.**

- Mrs. Blanco gone to visit her mother at the hospital.
- Finding a parking space there is usually easy during the week.
- Driving in the city during the evening rush hour.

**2.**

- To apply for a job at the new store in the mall.
- Asking the interviewer how often he would have to work on weekends.
- Shaking his new boss's hand, Tony knew he would like working there.

**3.**

- By the time Frances found out how expensive the wallpapering job would be.
- After getting estimates from five contractors, she decided to do the work herself.
- Before picking out an interesting wallpaper pattern that went well with her furniture.

**4.**

- Who borrowed Stefanie's car Saturday night.
- The nineteen-year-old car looked out of place next to the new models.
- Which the salesman was surprised to find in such good shape.

**5.**

- While waiting for her neighbor to move the car that blocked the driveway.
- To avoid hitting the other car, Michael had to back across the corner of the lawn.
- By making sure that no one will park across the driveway again.

**6.**

- Because Manuel was sure he had heard the same strange story many months ago.
- Although I will never forget how cold we were when we lost our heat last winter.
- Since Anna wasn't at the meeting, I took notes so that she wouldn't miss anything.

**7.**

- When my cousin moved to Troy, New York, after he finished school.
- After he went to all the trouble of fixing up his apartment.
- While living there, he made very few friends.

## Sentence Fragments



Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Which answer is written correctly?

1.    A.    The reason we drove to the lake was to go on a picnic. We ended up swimming all day.  
      B.    The reason we drove to the lake. Was to go on a picnic. We ended up swimming all day.  
      C.    The reason we drove to the lake was to go on a picnic we ended up swimming all day.  
      D.    The reason we drove to the lake was to go on a picnic. We ended up swimming. All day.
  
2.    A.    I couldn't believe the size. Of the mouse. It was several inches long. And very fat.  
      B.    I couldn't believe the size of the mouse. It was several inches long. Very fat.  
      C.    I couldn't believe the size of the mouse. It was several inches long and very fat.  
      D.    I couldn't believe the size of the mouse, it was several inches long, and very fat.
  
3.    A.    I forgot to remind.  
      B.    I forgot to remind Ashley about the meeting with John.  
      C.    Remind Ashley meeting with John.  
      D.    I forgot to remind Ashley, meeting with John.
  
4.    A.    While we were at West Town Mall; we were shopping.  
      B.    A store was robbed we were at West Town Mall.  
      C.    At West Town Mall, a store was robbed, we were there.  
      D.    A store was robbed while we were at West Town Mall.
  
5.    A.    Did you enjoy. The book about Anne Frank.  
      B.    Did you enjoy the book about Anne Frank?  
      C.    Did you enjoy the book? About Anne Frank?  
      D.    Did you enjoy book Anne Frank?
  
6.    A.    Finally finished the entire book!  
      B.    After finishing it late at night.  
      C.    I finally finished reading the entire book!  
      D.    After finishing it last at night the entire book.

