

Sentence Fragments and Complete Sentences

A sentence must have a subject and a verb. A sentence must also be a complete thought.

- A subject is a person, place, or thing. It names who or what the sentence is about. The subject does the action of the verb.
- A verb is either an action word that tells the reader what is happening or a state of being word (be, am, is, are, was, were).

A phrase fragment is missing either a subject or verb or both and is not a complete thought.

A dependent clause fragment looks like a complete sentence because it has a subject and a verb.

- However, it is introduced by a subordinating conjunction (*after, although, as, because, how, even if, since, that, unless, until, when, while, what*).
- The subordinating conjunction makes the clause incomplete; that is, the clause does not express a complete thought.

Example: Live at Eleven. Bowling for Dollars.

Newspaper headlines such as these are shortened for a reason. Simply adding a capital letter and a period does not magically make these words into a sentence. These are examples of fragments.

REMEMBER: A sentence needs both a subject and a verb. Who is live at eleven? Who is bowling for dollars?

Example: Ned Newscaster reports live at eleven on channel 13.

This word group has a subject (*Ned Newscaster*) and an action verb (*reports*). It also expresses a complete thought. It is a complete sentence.

Example: Ned reports.

Although this word group is very short, it is a complete sentence. It has a subject and a verb. It also is a complete thought.

Example: Sit down! Hurry up!

Although these word groups look like fragments because they appear to have no subject, these are examples of imperative sentences. Imperative sentences give a command. The subject of imperative sentences is actually understood to be *you*.

