

GRAMMAR REVIEW PACKET 5, Part II
SENTENCE ERRORS

A. THE SENTENCE FRAGMENT

A sentence contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought. When only a part of a sentence is written with a capital letter at the beginning and a period or question mark or exclamation point at the end, the result is a sentence fragment. A fragment is a part of a sentence and does not express a complete thought but has been punctuated as a complete sentence.

In each of the following examples, the sentence fragments are underlined. If you read only the fragments aloud, you will notice that they sound incomplete.

Examples: Women in the civil rights movement are well known. Including Mary McLeod Bethune and Mary Church Terrell.

Antonia Brico gained fame. When she conducted the first all-female orchestra in the 1930's.

Detecting Fragments:

If your ear leads you to suspect that you have written a sentence fragment, there are two tests that you can use to be certain. First, look for a subject and a verb. If you do not find both, you have a fragment.

Examples: Including Mary McLeod Bethune and Mary Church Terrell.
 With great concentration and determination.

Neither of these examples has a subject or a verb. (The word including can be a part of a verb phrase, but it is never a verb by itself.)

If the suspected fragment has both a subject and a verb, a second test can be applied. Ask yourself whether the group of words expresses a complete thought. Separated from the rest of its sentence, the fragment below does not make sense by itself. The reader wonders what happened "when she conducted the first all-female orchestra in the 1930's."

Example: When she conducted the first all-female orchestra in the 1930's.
 (she is the subject; conducted is the verb.)

Three Common Fragments:

1. A group of words beginning with an ing word. (A word that ends in ing cannot stand as the verb unless it has a helping verb with it.)

<i>Examples:</i>	<p><u>Studying for my exam.</u> I forgot the time. (fragment)</p> <p>Studying for my exam, I forgot the time. (correct)</p>
	<p>He fell. <u>Running down the street.</u> (fragment)</p> <p>He fell running down the street. (correct)</p>

2. A group of words beginning with a dependent (subordinate) word. Examples of subordinate words are before, when, as, if, since, and after.

Examples: When Mary called home. She talked to me. (fragment)
 When Mary called home, she talked to me. (correct)

 She will call you. If she can go. (fragment)
 She will call you if she can go. (correct)

3. A group of words beginning with either who, whom, whose, that, or which. In most cases, groups of words beginning with either who, whose, or which will be fragments unless they ask a question.

Examples: The letter was addressed to my sister. Who lives in Tampa. (fragment)
 The letter was addressed to my sister who lives in Tampa. (correct)

 He registered for the English course. Which was required for graduation. (fragment)
 He registered for the English course which was required for graduation. (correct)

As you can see from the following examples, the simplest way to correct a fragment is to rejoin it to the sentence from which it has been separated. Study the following examples and notice how the fragments are put back in the sentences in which they belong. Then continue with Exercise 3.

FRAGMENT: Northern California was a rather restful area. Until John Marshall discovered gold near Sacramento.

CORRECTED: Northern California was a rather restful area until John Marshall discovered gold near Sacramento.

FRAGMENT: Hansel and Gretel could not find the bread crumbs. Because the birds had eaten them.

CORRECTED: Hansel and Gretel could not find the bread crumbs because the birds had eaten them.

FRAGMENT: Ann spent the whole afternoon at the beach. Gathering shells for her collection.

CORRECTED: Ann spent the whole afternoon at the beach gathering shells for her collection.

EXERCISE 1: In the blank to the left, place either an S for sentence or an F for fragment.

- F 1. In the center ring of the circus.
- F 2. When the clown came on.
- S 3. The ringmaster was smartly dressed.
- F 4. On a wire stretched high above our heads.
- F 5. Because no nets were used.
- S 6. Sensing the danger of the act, the crowd fell silent.
- S 7. The dogs were dressed in evening clothes.

- F 8. Since the elephant was well trained.
- F 9. The graceful trapeze artists.
- S 10. When the animal trainer put his head in the lion's mouth, the audience gasped.

EXERCISE 2: If either of the following groups of words is a fragment, put an F in the blank to the left.

- F 1. Betsy can't have the meeting at her house. Because her little brother has the measles.
2. Electricity is everywhere around us. It is in the air and in the ground.
- F 3. We cleaned the three little fish. Hoping that nobody would ask to see our catch.
- F 4. Thoreau spent more than two years at Walden Pond. Living in a one-room shed.
- F 5. I promised to go to the movies with Elaine. Who would never forgive me if I went swimming instead.
6. Many students belong to Junior Achievement. Founded in 1919, it is a national organization that helps to develop leadership.
7. Pollyanna never gossips. If she can't think of something nice to say about another girl, she doesn't say anything.
- F 8. Maria Martinez, an Indian girl, gained fame for her outstanding pottery. Based on ancient methods.
9. If I can go, I'll call you before six. Otherwise, go without me.
- F 10. "A stitch in time saves nine" is an old proverb. Which can be applied to many daily situations.

EXERCISE 3: Some of the following items consist of two sentences. Others contain a fragment. Correctly punctuate those items containing fragments by rejoining them to the sentences from which they have been separated.

1. You can watch the late news(x) **if** you are willing to stay up.
2. George's excuse was ingenious. No one had ever been locked in the school bus before.
3. Ana is finally going to have the party(x) **which** she postponed three weeks ago.
4. The playoff game is at six o'clock tomorrow(x) **unless**, of course, it rains.
5. I heard a call for help and turned the boat around(x) **to** find Jack floundering in the waves.
6. We are going to the beach tomorrow(x) **if** the day is warm.

7. Saturday was cold and rainy(x) with very good prospects for snow.
8. Mrs. Ikeda's car won't start because the battery is low. She says that I left the headlights on all night.
9. First, I do the homework(x) which requires the most time.
10. We did not practice the guitar this afternoon(x) because Ruth and Andrea had to write a report.

EXERCISE 4: Correct each of the following fragments by adding a sentence to the group of words. Be sure to punctuate correctly.

1. When she reached the top of the mountain,
2. Counting the money
3. Although the sea was rough,
4. If he had not sneezed,
5. Unless something is done,

EXERCISE 5: Indicate with a **C** (complete sentence) or **F** (fragment) whether the underlined words are complete sentences or fragments.

1. The school board found the cost of building a new high school prohibitive. And decided to renovate the old one. 1. F
2. The dogs and cats who were running down the street in the middle of the night. 2. F
3. I was certain that she would come. Because she had expressed real interest in our work. 3. F
4. All were piled on the porch. 4. C
5. She was happy. As a matter of fact, she was delighted. 5. C
6. The ship which docked in Miami last night during the storm. 6. F
7. He parked his car. Then he hurried into the courthouse. 7. C
8. I sat by the telephone. Waiting for her to call me. 8. F
9. Because he was interested in rocks, he majored in geology. 9. C
10. Tom made some bad investments. Such as buying desert land and speculating in beans. 10. F

B. THE COMMA SPLICE

When two sentences are joined with just a comma (no conjunction), an error known as the comma splice results. The following example illustrates the comma splice.

The author wrote many stories for children, she also wrote a number of historical novels.
(comma splice)

In the above example, two sentences are joined by means of a comma. A conjunction (joining word) has been omitted, creating a comma splice. This error may be corrected in any one of three ways.

1. Use a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so,) after the comma. (Use the acronym FANBOYS to remember these conjunctions.)

Example: The author wrote many stories for children, and she also wrote a number of historical novels.

2. Use a semicolon between the two sentences.

Example: The author wrote many stories for children; she also wrote a number of historical novels.

3. Punctuate the two sentences by putting a period between them.

Example: The author wrote many stories for children. She also wrote a number of historical novels.

EXERCISE: Label each group of words as either **C** (correct) or **CS** (comma splice). Punctuate each comma splice correctly. Remember that some of the commas are used correctly.

1. People have long wondered at the noises of animals. **Can** animals communicate with each other? 1. CS
2. Scientists are convinced, however, that some animals have more effective communication systems than people have. 2. C
3. The porpoise, mimicking a person's voice, speaks eight times faster than the average human. 3. C
4. By slowing down the porpoise's voice, scientists can study it. 4. C
5. Porpoises can imitate human laughter. **Furthermore**, they can imitate a "Bronx cheer." 5. CS
6. There is, in addition, some evidence that porpoises can manage to learn words and phrases. 6. C
7. After the porpoise has listened to a person who has a Southern accent, it can mimic the accent. 7. C
8. A knowledge of communications among animals may help us communicate with creatures on other planets. **Consequently**, funds are being provided for such research. 8. CS
9. Animals do communicate with each other. **We** know that. 9. CS

10. Since porpoises can learn the meaning of certain commands, they make good performers at Sea World. 10. C
11. In fact, they do tricks after hearing words like fish, swim, and jump. 11. C
12. Can you imagine yourself communicating with a porpoise, or does this seem impossible to you? 12. C
13. Swimming at a fast speed, the porpoise glides through the water. 13. C
14. At one time in this country, people laughed at the idea of communicating with a porpoise. Today we know that this communication process is just beginning. 14. CS
15. The porpoise is truly a fascinating creature, and it will be studied for many years to come. 15. C

C. THE FUSED SENTENCE

The fused sentence (also called a run-on sentence) is very similar to the comma splice. The only difference is that the fused sentence consists of two or more sentences that are run together without a period, semicolon, or comma and conjunction between the sentences. The following is an illustration of a fused sentence:

Example: The girls made the fire the boys cooked the steaks.
The book was interesting therefore, I read rapidly.

In this example, two sentences have been run together. The error might be corrected by following any of the same three suggestions given for correcting the comma splice.

1. Punctuate as two separate sentences by placing a period between the sentences.

Examples: The girls made the fire. The boys cooked the steaks.
The book was interesting. Therefore, I read rapidly.

2. Place a semicolon between the two sentences.

Examples: The girls made the fire; the boys cooked the steaks.
The book was interesting; I read it rapidly.

Pay special attention to any transitional words or phrases that may appear after a semicolon. Refer to section C of Review Packet 5, Part 1, for review on comma and semicolon rules if you do not understand the following examples.

The book was interesting; therefore, I read it rapidly.
The book was interesting; I, consequently, read it rapidly.
The book was interesting; I read it rapidly, as a result.

3. Place a comma and a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) between the sentences.

Examples: The book was interesting, and I read it rapidly.
The girls made the fire, but the boys cooked the steaks.

Be sure there are two separate sentences. The first example below has two sentences. The second is merely one sentence with two verbs and, therefore, needs no comma.

The girls made the fire, and the boys cooked the steaks.
The girls made the fire and cooked the steaks.

You may wonder when to use a period and capital letter and when to use a semicolon between two independent clauses. In general, use a period and capital letter. Only if the sentences are closely related in meaning should you use a semicolon. However, either way is correct.

EXERCISE 1: Correct the following fused sentences by inserting the proper punctuation.

1. We went to the lake. **I**t was too cold for a swim.
2. I shall not go. I do not want to go.
3. The office was light, airy, and cheerful. **W**e enjoyed working there.
4. The great English ship arrived. **T**he passengers cheered.
5. My brother volunteered for military service. I followed his example.
6. I must leave now. I promised to be at the club at six.
7. Mr. Adams, our manager, called for me at the office. I had gone to the bank.
8. On Tuesday, March 15, the board will hold its regular meeting. **T**he representative from Chicago will not be present.
9. John's sales were the highest. Bill's sales were the lowest.
10. Dale had experienced many failures. **H**e still held the hope of becoming a successful businessman.

EXERCISE 2: Label each sentence **C** (correct) or **FS** (fused sentence). Then correct the fused sentences.

- FS 1. He plays on a softball team. **H**e's the captain.
- FS 2. I'm going to the park. **I**t's too nice a day to stay inside.
- FS 3. He'll have to take the bus. I can't wait any longer.
- C 4. She's been all over the United States and is going to Europe.

- FS 5. The day dawned clear. **N**ot a cloud was in the sky.
- C 6. We gathered firewood from the nearby woods and built a fire.
- FS 7. I caught a tiny trout. **W**e had it for breakfast.
- C 8. Then we broke camp and started home.
- C 9. At that time my family was living near a small town in the heart of the mining country.
- FS 10. My pals and I explored the caves. **W**e didn't realize the dangers.

REVIEW OF SENTENCE ERRORS

Directions: Label the following items as either **C**-correct, **F**-fragment, **CS**-comma splice, or **FS**-fused sentence. Then correct each fragment, comma splice, and fused sentence.

EXERCISE 1:

- C 1. I'd like to buy a piano, but I really don't have the money right now.
- CS 2. She gives wonderful parties. **I** can't wait for her next one.
- F 3. The people on the park bench who meet every day and eat lunch together.
- FS 4. I'm saving money for a trip to Oklahoma. **M**y brother lives out there.
- FS 5. He was beaming. **H**e got an A on the exam.
- FS 6. The noise from the parade is overwhelming. **I** can hardly think, let alone study.
- C 7. We have to insulate the living room; our heating bills are running much too high.
- C 8. Whenever I go on a boat, I get seasick.
- F 9. The book which is used in ENC 1101 and is not available until May.
- FS 10. Eric's dog chased the ambulance. **T**hat was the last we saw of him.

EXERCISE 2:

- CS 1. Don't make me laugh while I'm eating. **O**therwise, I might do something gross and embarrassing.
- C 2. The floor of our clubhouse had a trap door. This is where we kept our supplies.
- C 3. If I remember correctly, I once learned that Oliver Wendell Holmes greatly influenced the law.

- CS 4. The second semester of college is always easier than the first. **O**ne has to adjust to a new place and new people, as well as new courses.
- C 5. The telephone rang in the middle of the night, and this sound frightened the children.
- F 6. The opportunity to study the criminal mind.
- F 7. After class I am going to go straight home. To do my homework.
- CS 8. The cat bounded into the room where the gerbils' cage was kept. **S**he loved to sit by their cage, pawing at the glass and teasing them.
- C 9. Who can ever stand to discard a comfortable, old bathrobe?
- F 10. Because parents believe that children should be seen and not heard.

EXERCISE 3:

- FS 1. What should we do about the students who are freshmen? **S**hould they continue their education or join the army?
- C 2. Asked to comment on the number of his relatives on his payroll, the politician said that he would have to "think about it."
- F 3. The employee who speaks up in meetings most frequently.
- C 4. It was the eighteenth of April in seventeen seventy-five, and hardly a man is now alive who remembers that famous day and year.
- FS 5. Psychologists find that some people learn best from written materials. **O**thers, however, learn best by listening.
- C 6. Until further notice, those cars are parked illegally.
- C 7. When Spooner said that the Lord was a shoving leopard, he meant that the Lord was a loving shepherd.
- C 8. Good salespeople have to be able to withstand disappointments; they can't expect to make every sale.
- CS 9. A pair of scissors, a stapler, and a roll of tape are valuable tools for writers. **T**hey can use these things to help reorganize what they have written.
- FS 10. Mary had a little lamb. **I**t followed her to school one day.