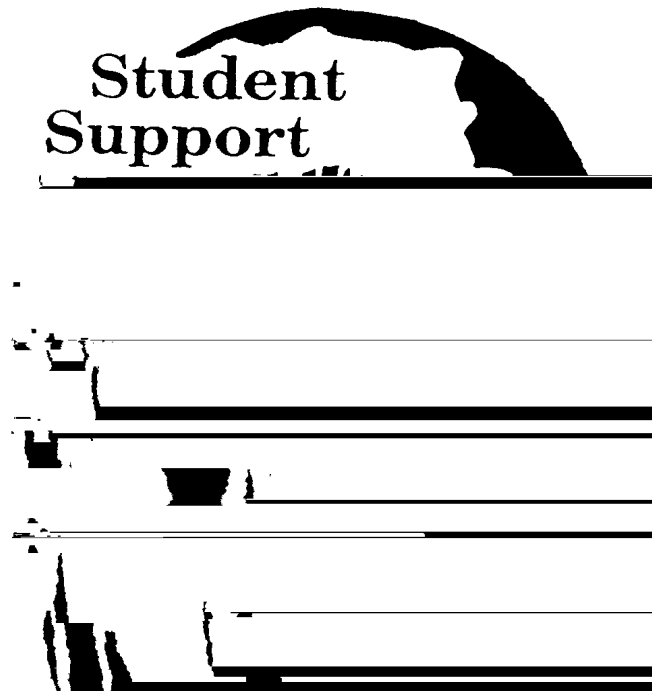


Sentence Competency Packet



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LESSON I

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SENTENCES AND FRAGMENTS

A sentence must have a subject and a verb.

A sentence must have an action (verb) and a person, place or thing (subject) performing that action. For example, in the following sentence:

Unemployment is rising.

Subject: Unemployment

Verb: is rising

A sentence must also make sense on its own.

Any group of words that does not make sense on its own is called a fragment. Here are two examples of fragments:

As people ask (What happens when people ask?)

HOW TO IDENTIFY FRAGMENTS

A sentence has at least one subject/verb set.

Study the following example:

All students need to complete this module.

There is a subject “students” and a verb “need” with some other words that together make sense and convey a complete thought.

When the subject or the verb or both are missing, it is easier to identify a fragment.

Look at these examples of fragments:

1. Stopped to let off passengers.
2. Wayne Gretzky, the famous hockey player.
3. To the game on Thursday night.

∅ If you wondered what stopped to let off passengers, then you noticed that number 1 was missing a subject.

Consider these possible corrections:

1. THE BUS stopped to let off passengers.
The subject, bus, was added.
2. Wayne Gretzky, the famous hockey player, BECAME the captain of Team Canada.
The verb, became, was added with other words.
3. The entire FAMILY WENT to the game on Thursday night.
The subject, family, and verb, went, were added.

∅ There could be many other choices of subjects and/or

TO + VERB

Verbs with “to” before them need another verb to help. The form of the verb expressed by to + verb is called the infinitive form.

Fragment: To visit her mother during the holidays.

Look at these examples:

1. Before the concert started.
 2. Since they arrived in Massachusetts.
 3. Although it rained.
- ∅ If you wondered what happened before the concert started, you noticed that this

HOW TO CORRECT FRAGMENTS

If the subject, the verb, or both are incomplete or missing, you need to make the idea complete. There are three ways to do this. In all methods, you may need to add other words to make the meaning clear of the reader.

1. Join the fragment to the sentence **BEFORE IT.**

Incorrect:

The tourists will still be able to watch the whales. (Sentence)

Because the ship's captain will conduct special trips. (Fragment)

Correct:

Tourists will still be able to watch the whales because the ship's captain will conduct special trips.

2. Join the fragment to the sentence **AFTER** it.

Incorrect:

If the weather is warm enough. (Fragment)

We can go to the beach. (Sentence)

Correct:

If the weather is warm enough, we can go to the beach.

∅ Use a COMMA when you connect a fragment like this to the sentence.

3. Complete the thought.

Incorrect:

Because the roads are covered with snow. (Fragment)

Correct:

Because the roads are covered with snow, motorists are warned to drive carefully.

∅ Your corrections may be different. The examples are one possible way to correct the fragments.

The following two exercises will give you practice in correcting fragments.

LESSON II

COMPOUND SENTENCES

A Compound Sentence contains two simple sentences (two independent clauses), joined by a conjunction.

Read the following three pairs of independent clauses.

1. Jim won the race. He broke his previous record.
2. The children are playing outside. The teachers are meeting

Exercise 2-1

State whether the following sentences are simple or compound. Write an "S" if the sentence is simple and a "C" if it is compound. Check your answers (page 22).

1. The leader asked for volunteers, but she did not receive a reply from anyone in the room.
2. You may go by taxi or wait for the bus.
3. He applied for the job but did not get it.
4. Some of the furniture is broken, and the place is a wreck.
5. John disliked the wine; he drank it anyway.
6. The food banks in Ottawa have been collecting and distributing food to needy families in the area.
7. Pedestrians and cyclists walk or cycle on the same path.
8. The cyclists should have a different path, and they should not be allowed to ride on the same path as pedestrians.
9. The house was broken into, but nothing was stolen.
10. Are the children in bed, or are they still playing outside?

Exercise 2-2

State whether the following sentences are simple or compound. Write an "S" if the sentence is simple and "C" if it is compound. Check your answers (page 22).

1. Many applications were received, but only a few were acceptable.
2. The parcel can be sent by mail or delivered by hand.
3. They replied to the invitation but did not come.
4. The workers threw down their tools, and then they walked off the job.
5. At the present time, inflation is a worldwide problem, and the World Bank is trying to deal with it.
6. The hurricane hit the island yesterday; many homes and trees were flattened.
7. The art class went to the new art gallery and viewed the works on display.
8. Someone finally wrote the definition on the chalkboard, and all the students copied it.
9. Tennis and golf are popular sports and are enjoyed by many.
10. Columbus sailed to the New World; he discovered America.

If you are still uncertain about Compound and Simple sentences meet with a tutor in the Writing Center.

Exercise 2-3

RUN-ON SENTENCES

Two or more sentences that have been written together with no punctuation, or with merely a comma, are called **run-on sentences**.

RUN-ON sentences may be corrected in one of four ways:

1. Using a **conjunction and a comma**.
2. Using a **semi-colon (;)**.
3. Separating the independent clauses into two or more sentences.
4. Converting one independent clause into a dependent clause by using introductory words such as because, after, since, when, etc.

Example: The book was very interesting, **therefore** I read it all night

The example is correctly written in any of the following ways:

1. The book was very interesting, **AND** therefore I read it all night.
2. The book was very interesting; therefore, I read it all night.
3. The book was very interesting. **Therefore**, I read it all night.
4. **Since** the book was very interesting, I read it all night.

NOTE: Some words look like conjunctions, but they are not. The words “then”, “therefore”, “also”, “because” and “however” are NOT conjunctions. DO NOT use them to join two sentences together.

Examples:	John put on his coat, then he left the house.	INCORRECT
	John put on his coat, AND then he left the house.	CORRECT
	John put on his coat. Then he left the house.	CORRECT
	AFTER John put on his coat, he left the house.	CORRECT

Exercise 2-5 Identify each of the following word groups by writing “sentence” or “run-on” after it. Correct the run-on sentences using one of the four methods. Check your answers (page 23).

1. Because he was thirsty, Jack ordered another bottle of water.
2. Jack was thirsty, he ordered another bottle of water.
3. The traffic was crawling, however we arrived at the airport on time.
4. Jill was at the party, but her husband stayed home.
5. She washed the dishes, then she dried them.

6. Arthur was driving too fast, therefore he missed the exit.
7. While we were on vacation, our home was vandalized.
8. It rained all day; the streets and basements were flooded.
9. Return the lawnmower to Philip, also ask him where my shovel is.
10. Since the weather is so bad, we'll stay at home and watch television.

Exercise 2-6

Identify each of the following word groups by writing "sentence" or "run-on" after it. Correct the run-on sentences. Check your answers (page 23).

1. After we ate we went for a walk.
2. The children were tired, they fell asleep.
- 3.

Exercise 2-7

Rewrite the following paragraphs by correcting the run-on sentences. Check your work (page 23).

Learning the stories behind words is a fascinating hobby, it helps one to remember words, too. There are many interesting stories behind common words, our word “alphabet” is an example. “Alpha” is the first letter in the list of Greek letters and “beta” is the second. The Greeks used those first two letters to stand for their entire lis

Appendix

COMMON ERRORS IN GRAMMAR

The following represents a list of the most common major and minor errors. If you are interested in more detailed knowledge, a tutor in the Writing Center can recommend materials for you.

MAJOR ERRORS

1. **Sentence Fragments:** See Lesson 1

2. **Run-on Sentences:** See Lesson 2

3. **Subject/Verb Agreement**

If a sentence has a singular subject, the singular form of the verb must be used:

The vase is on the table.

If the subject is plural, the verb must be as well:

The vases are on the table.

∅ Most problems occur when there is a long phrase separating the subject and the verb.

Example: Only Frank, of my many friends and acquaintances, visit me when I am sick.

The verb should be “visits” because the subject is “Frank”; but because the noun nearest the verb is plural, the verb “visit” looks right.

∅ The following indefinite pronouns are singular and take a singular verb:

anyone	everyone	each	someone
anybody	everybody	one	somebody
nobody	no one	none	much

Examples: None of the visiting heads of state was impressed.

Everyone in the class chooses an activity.

Not much is known about viruses.

∅ When using “either...or,” “neither...nor” word pairs, the verb agrees with the subject nearest it. Study the following two examples.

Example: Neither he nor I am at fault.

Either Maya or her aunts are here.

Neither I nor he is at fault.

Either her aunts or Maya is here.

MINOR ERRORS

1. Punctuation

The punctuation marks most often misused are commas, semi-colons, and colons.

∅ Commas (,)

The most common fault is overuse; use commas sparingly. A good guideline is to read a sentence aloud and insert commas only where you pause naturally.

Read the following examples aloud, pausing at the commas, to see how comma placement changes meaning:

John, my brother, hates milk. John, my brother hates milk.
John, my brother and I hate milk. John, my brother, and I hate milk.

Use commas to separate the items in a series. The comma before the last item in the series (before *and*) is optional, but it is usually more clear.

The shuttle connects **Hathorne, Danvers, and Lynn**.
Bring to each class your **pen, notebook, and text**.

∅ Semi-colons (;)

Like a period, a semi-colon will follow a complete sentence. When the meaning of two sentences is closely related, a semi-colon is preferable to a period.

Anne, close the door; it has started to rain.

∅ Colons (:)

A colon is used before a series of words or a list introduced by “the following”, “thus”, “in the following manner”, or “for example”.

Correct: For the trip, campers should provide **the following:** sleeping bags, sturdy shoes, heavy jackets and personal toilet articles.

Correct: Add the ingredients in the following order: butter, sugar, salt, vanilla, nutmeg, cinnamon and nuts.

Incorrect: I enjoy: classical, folk, and rock music.

Correct: I enjoy classical, folk, and rock music.

Do not use a colon after a preposition.

Incorrect: My son is involved in: school, sports, and music.

Correct: My son is involved in school, sports and music.

or

Sc

Ø Apostrophe (')

Apostrophes are used to show **possession or ownership**, and in **contractions**.

If a word, singular or plural, **does not end in “s”**, use **“s”** to form the possessive.

Correct: We will meet at my lawyer's office. (One lawyer's firm)

3. Numbers

Write out numbers *under* 100, except when the time of day is followed by a.m. or p.m.

There are 365 days in a year, and it rained on eighty.

It was 2:00 a.m. when Alice phoned to say that her flight would arrive at five that afternoon.

4. Verb Tense Shift

It is incorrect to shift back and forth from past to present tense. This happens most often when people try to write in the present tense about personal experiences.

Incorrect: I am poised, tense, on the diving board, ready to spring. Suddenly, there was a flash of light. I can't see a thing.

Correct: I was poised, tense, on the diving board, ready to spring. Suddenly there was a flash of light. I couldn't see a thing.

5. Pronoun Shift

This error involves changing back

Pronouns can be masculine, feminine or neuter, and this is not a problem until we get to indefinite pronouns (they are listed under “Subject/Agreement”), when they refer to both males and females.

Correct: None of the men forgot his sunglasses.

Correct: Each member of our ladies’ choir has her own music.

There is no difficulty with these because the groups are clearly either male or female.

But when a pronoun refers to a group containing both males and females, one can run into trouble. There are three accepted methods to address this problem.

1. Use the masculine pronoun to refer to male/female groups. This is not incorrect, but it is distasteful to some.

Example: Everyone should bring his own lunch.

2. Use “s/he”, or “his/her.” Some people find this awkward.

Example: Everyone should bring his/her own lunch.

3. Use the plural pronoun. Although, strictly speaking, this is not correct, it is becoming more popular as a solution to sexist language.

Example: Everyone should bring their own lunch.

Answer Key

<u>Ex 1-1</u>	<u>Ex 1-2</u>	<u>Ex 1-3</u> (Remember that your corrections may be different)
1. S	1. F	1. F The man leaning against the stop sign at the street corner looked at me.
2. S	2. S	2. S No correction needed
3. F	3. S	3. F He put in the last suitcase, then watched his friend trying to close the trunk.
4. S	4. S	4. S No correction needed

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Ex 2-5 These are possible corrections. Yours may be different.

1. Sentence
2. Run-on Jack was thirsty; he ordered another bottle of soda.
3. Run-on The traffic was crawling; however we arrived at the airport on time.
4. Sentence
5. Run-on She washed the dishes, and then she dried them.
6. Run-on Arthur was driving too fast; therefore he missed the exit.
7. Sentence
8. Sentence
9. Run-on Return the lawnmower to Philip, and ask him where my shovel is.
10. Sentence

Ex 2-6

1. Run-on After we ate, we went for a walk.
2. Run-on The children were tired; they fell asleep.
3. Run-on Send two passport pictures, and include a copy of your birth certificate.
4. Sentence
5. Sentence
6. Run-on They competed in the marathon; therefore they were tired.
7. Sentence
8. Sentence
9. Run-on The teachers were on strike; however the schools were kept open.
10. Sentence

Ex 2-7

Learning the stories behind words is a fascinating hobby; it helps one to remember words, too. There are many interesting stories behind common words. **O**ur word “alphabet” is an example. “Alpha” is the first letter in the list of Greek letters and “beta” is the second. The Greeks used those first two letters to stand for their entire list of letters; thus they called their entire list “alphabetos”. We do the same thing in English, **but** we call our entire list our “ABC’s.” **W**e also have taken over those two Greek words to mean our entire list of letters, and thus we speak of our “alphabet.”

“Bonfire” is another interesting word; it goes back to the Middle Ages. In times of plague, human bodies were burned on funeral pyres. **T**herefore the fires were called “bonfires” (fires of bones). Later the word came to mean open-air fires, and the spelling then changed to “bonfire”. Today we enjoy bonfires and never think of their gruesome beginning. Learning word origins is fun, **and** their derivations are often surprising.