

# Sentence Fragments

To use this handout, you must first understand the difference between an independent clause and a dependent clause.

- An independent clause is a phrase that contains a subject and verb and that can stand alone as a complete sentence.
- A dependent clause is a phrase that does not contain a subject and a verb, cannot stand alone as a complete sentence, and must be reworded or attached to an independent clause to form a complete sentence.

A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. It may express a complete thought, but it cannot stand alone.

## Identifying and Correcting Sentence Fragments

- Often a sentence fragment is a dependent clause. Phrases that begin with words like *even though, unless, if, after, although, while, before, after, during, until, and when* are always dependent clauses and must be attached to an independent clause to form a complete sentence.

**Fragment:** Even though I studied for the final exam.

**Sentence:** Even though I studied for the final exam, I won't make a good grade in the class if I don't complete all of the assignments.

- Sometimes a sentence fragment is a phrase with no subject. You can make it a sentence by attaching an independent clause, which always contains a subject.

**Fragment:** Reading chapter after chapter in the textbook.

**Sentence:** I tried to learn all the material for the exam by reading chapter after chapter in the textbook.

- A sentence fragment can also be a list that has been disconnected from its introduction. Adding the rest of the sentence turns it into a complete thought.

**Fragment:** Such as Algebra, Biology, and English.

**Sentence:** Seeking a degree in art, I sometimes fail to recognize the importance of classes such as Algebra, Biology, and English.

- Sentence fragments are often intentional in newspaper and magazines ads. While sentence fragments are acceptable in these contexts, you should avoid using sentence fragments in research papers, business or professional reports, and job applications.

**Fragment:** Faster! Better! No money down!