



Eliminating Sentence Fragments

Many sentence fragments are easy to identify – they lack a subject, a verb or both. But one variety may be confusing precisely because it *does* contain a subject and a verb.

- Fragment: Because I went to the beach.
This fragment has a subject – I – and a verb – went.

So what makes this example a sentence fragment? To fully understand the problem, it may be helpful to review independent and dependent clauses. A *clause* is a group of words with a subject and a verb. But only independent clauses can stand on their own, as complete sentences. Here is why:

- An independent clause expresses a complete thought.

I went to the beach

- A dependent clause does not express a complete thought.

Because I went to the beach

It may seem ironic that *adding* a word could make this group of words *less* complete, but consider that dependent clauses seem to hang in suspense, without resolution. Dependent clauses may begin with words such as *while, before, after, if, since, although, unless, until, when, where, since*. These are called *subordinating words*.

To eliminate fragments, writers have two principal options:

- Connect the dependent clause to an independent clause

Because I went to the beach, I didn't get the mail Thursday.

- Eliminate the subordinating word.

I went to the beach.