

MPC English & Study Skills Center

Avoiding Fragments and Run-ons (Comma Splices & Fused Sentences)

Fragments

‡ **Fragments** are incomplete sentences. Every sentence must contain a subject and a verb and at least one independent clause that could stand alone as a sentence.

Verb Problems

The boy running fast. (Incorrect--there is no helping verb.)
The boy **is** running fast. (Correct)

She seen the boys. (Incorrect--there is no helping verb.)
She **has** seen the boys. (Correct)

The nice man in the car. (Incorrect--there is no verb at all.)
The nice man **was** in the car. (Correct)

Subject Problems

Catches the ball. (Incorrect--there is no subject.)
Tom catches the ball. (Correct)

Was studying hard. (Incorrect--there is no subject.)
Yoshiko was studying hard. (Correct)

In the evening was nice. ("In the evening" is a prepositional phrase, so it cannot be used as a subject.)
The evening was nice. (Correct)

Dependent Clause Problems

Although he married her. (This is a dependent clause and needs another half to be complete.)
Although he married her, **he wanted to party with his friends.** (Correct)

Because she is a good friend. (This is a dependent clause and needs another half to be complete.)
I asked her to go because she is a good friend. (Correct)

The woman who was holding a gun. ("Who was holding a gun" is an adjective clause describing "woman." The subject "woman" must have a verb.)
The woman who was holding a gun **was an escaped prisoner.** (Correct)

Phrase Problems

In the afternoon. (This is a prepositional phrase only; there is no subject or verb.)

In the afternoon, **I went to the library.** (Correct)

Running down the hall. (This is a participial phrase only; there is no subject or verb.)

Running down the hall, **the students passed the principal.** (Correct)

or

She was running down the hall. (Correct)

Run-ons: Comma Splices and Fused Sentences

‡ Comma splices occur where two complete sentences are connected with a comma rather than having an ending punctuation or a conjunction.

Comma Splices

Susan is worried about the class, she studied for six hours.

(Incorrect—this is two separate sentences.)

‡ Fused sentences are similar to comma splices, but they occur when two complete sentences are run together with no punctuation.

Fused Sentences

He works hard he wants to get ahead.

(Incorrect—this is two separate sentences.)

Corrections for Comma Splices and Fused Sentences

‡ *Comma splices and fused sentences can be corrected by adding ending punctuation.*

Susan is worried about the class. She studied for six hours.
He works hard. He wants to get ahead.

‡ *Comma splices and fused sentences can be corrected by adding conjunctions (properly punctuated).*

Coordinating Conjunctions

Susan is worried about the class, so she studied for six hours.
He works hard, for he wants to get ahead.

Subordinating

Because Susan is worried about the class, she studied for six hours.
He works hard since he wants to get ahead.

Conjunctive Adverb

Susan is worried about the class; therefore, she studied for six hours.
He works hard; moreover, he wants to get ahead.

‡ *Comma splices and fused sentences can be corrected by adding a semicolon without a conjunction.*

Susan is worried about the class; she studied for six hours.
He works hard; he wants to get ahead.