

# Correcting Sentence Fragments



**The Writing Center**  
Hamline University  
Bush Library, Lower Level  
651-523-2026  
[writingcenter@hamline.edu](mailto:writingcenter@hamline.edu)



## What are Sentence Fragments?

A sentence fragment is a group of words that might look like a sentence, but actually is not. When standing alone, sentence fragments are not difficult to spot:

*Beside my laptop on the corner of the desk.*

*And then left the classroom.*

Fragments are harder to spot when they appear next to related sentences.

*I need to buy a new backpack. Because the one I have now has a big rip in it.*

*I read lots of books over winter break. Including The Kite Runner, The Life of Pi, and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.*

Every sentence should have both a subject and a verb, and every sentence should be able to stand alone as an independent clause.

## How to Repair Sentence Fragments

If the fragment relates to the sentence preceding it, it can be joined to that sentence, often by using a comma.

*I need to buy a new backpack because the one I have now has a big rip in it.*

*I read lots of books over winter break, including The Kite Runner, The Life of Pi, and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.*

Another way to correct a fragment is to insert more information at the beginning of the fragment.

*I read lots of books over winter break. Some of those were The Kite Runner, The Life of Pi, and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban.*

Sometimes other punctuation or rewording might be necessary to connect a sentence fragment to the main clause.

Incorrect:

*The current infrastructure for food distribution is inadequate. Which is why changes are being made.*

Correct:

*Because the current infrastructure for food distribution is inadequate, changes are being made.*

Sometimes providing examples or explanations can lead to unintended sentence fragments. This can occur when you use the following words at the beginning of the sentence:

also	especially
in addition	namely
that is	and
for example	like
or	but
for instance	mainly
such as	

*Changes are being made to the current infrastructure for food distribution because it is inadequate. Especially in the Midwest where distances are greater.*

Sometimes journalists or literary writers use sentence fragments for emphasis, to answer a question, as a transition, or in exclamations. Advertisers often use sentence fragments. As a student writing term papers and academic essays, however, you will find it best to avoid sentence fragments.

## Accessing More Information

- The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- The Writing Centers at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University. [www.csbsju.edu/writingcenters](http://www.csbsju.edu/writingcenters)

## Acknowledgments

Information for this brochure was adapted from:

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. 6th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007.

"Sentence Fragments." The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University. 27 Jan. 2009 <[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_frag.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_frag.html)>.

## Where to Find Help on Campus

Consultants at the **Hamline University Writing Center**, located in the basement of Bush Library, are eager to help you with all stages of your writing. We will work with you whether you have just received an assignment and have no idea how to begin or you have a finished draft and want help with revisions.

You can make appointments online at WC Online. Simply follow the instructions at:

<http://rich37.com/hamline>

We look forward to seeing you!