

RECOGNIZING AND CORRECTING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

The habitual fragment writer often finds avoiding written fragments difficult-to-impossible because fragments are accepted and widely used both in spoken communication and in advertising. Therefore, they sound right to most people.

Although fragments arise from many sources, probably the main cause is punctuating as a full sentence (using a capital letter and end punctuation) a group of words that should be connected to the previous or following sentence. One way to identify a fragment is to read—aloud—each set of words, from its beginning capital letter to its end punctuation.

EXERCISE

Critically examine the unit to determine if, alone, it expresses a full thought. If not, are the missing elements located in an adjacent group of words? If so, combining the units may repair the damage. Be sure that you don't create a new problem while correcting the original one (misplaced modifier, for example). Apply the above instructions to the sentences below.

1. Surprised by the large number of students. Mary did not have enough copies of the syllabus.

2. Martin asked his boss for a raise. Without success.

3. When Anthony gathered some firewood. Charles built a campfire.

4. Everyone gathered in the den. To surprise Nancy on her birthday.

5. Written by an early American poet. Who had lived during the time of George Washington.

6. Felix has wanted to visit New York City. For as long as I can remember.

7. Even though Madelaine has never graduated from high school. She is taking several college courses.

8. Mary Ellen gave me her phone number. In case I want to call her.

9. Without ever leaving his home on the west coast. Charley learned all about life in the Far East.

10. We had a mid-term examination in History 203. Which was not as difficult as we had

11. If you just give Cookie a gentle tap. The dog will behave very obediently.

12. Wilbur does his homework only on Saturdays. Never on a day when he has to go to work.

13. Because Juanita has had such a soft voice. She plans to use an amplifier during her speech.

14. The manager suggested that I write a letter to the manufacturer of the broken clock. The usual procedure in such a situation.

15. After a semester's work. A student needs a vacation before starting to study again.

EXERCISE

Below is an advertisement that appeared in a well-known magazine. It is written in conversational, informal style. Although it is an effective sales piece, it contains many fragments, which make it unsuitable for formal, college-level essay writing. Underline each fragment. What elements are missing from the group of words? Try to rewrite the copy without fragments.

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