

Sentence Fragments

A group of words that is punctuated as a sentence, but that is not a grammatically complete sentence, is called a **fragment** or **sentence fragment**. Although some writers use fragments intentionally (in creative introductions, for example), fragments are usually unacceptable in college and professional writing.

Complete sentence: David is a talented artist.

[The sentence has a subject (David) and verb (is) and expresses a complete and independent thought].

Fragment: Because David is a talented artist.

[This may appear to have a subject and verb (David is) but the clause does not express a complete thought. It is a subordinate or dependent clause and must be “attached” to an independent clause to form a sentence.

Correct: Because David is a talented artist, he was awarded the scholarship.

Fragment: Like a talented artist.

Correct: He sings like a talented artist.

Look carefully at the following examples of common mistakes. Can you identify the fragment?

1. Although being left-handed has been seen as a minor misfortune. Many great athletes, artists, and political leaders have succeeded in adjusting to a right-handed world.

Correct: Although being left-handed has been seen as a minor misfortune, many great athletes, artists, and political leaders have succeeded in adjusting to a right-handed world.

2. Collectively they vowed to combine their efforts toward one goal. To win first place next year.

Correct: Collectively they vowed to combine their efforts toward one goal: to win first place next year.

Collectively they vowed to combine their efforts toward one goal: to win first place next year.

Collectively they vowed to combine their efforts toward one goal. The goal was to win first place next year.