

# STETSON UNIVERSITY

## Writing Center Handouts

### Avoiding Fragments, Fused Sentences, and Comma Splices

#### Unintentional Fragment

Fragments are incomplete sentences, which means they cannot stand alone. Adding the phrase “Did you know that” before everything you have written as a sentence can catch many felonies. If it does not make sense, then the sentence probably cannot stand alone.

A complete sentence can include a lot of different elements, but it **MUST** have a subject (not just a noun) and a verb (that is referring to the subject).

Incorrect: Walking to the store.

- ✓ Correct: Walking to the store, we sang songs. (we=subject/ sang=verb referring to subject)
- ✓ Correct: We walked to the store. (we=subject/ walked=verb referred to subject)

Chunks of words that begin with one of the words below **CANNOT** stand alone as sentences, even if they have a noun and verb. These chunks of words **MUST** be connected (at the beginning or end) of a sentence that could stand alone.

After    Although    As    Because    Even though    Though    If    Once    While  
Since    That    Unless    Until    When    Whenever    Where    Whether    Whereas

Transition words/phrases (see below) are different than the words above. They **CAN** be inserted at the beginning, the middle, or the end of a complete sentence that can stand alone.

Therefore                  However                  For Instance                  Finally                  Thus  
Furthermore              In Fact                  Still                          On the other hand              Of course  
Moreover                  In other words              Similarly                      Also                          For example  
Nevertheless              As a result                  For instance                  NOTE: Although is  
NOT on this list

Incorrect: Although the sentence seemed complete.

- ✓ Correct: However, the sentence seemed complete. (however=subject/ see=verb referring to subject)

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- ✓ Correct: Although the sentence seemed complete, it was not complete until now.

### Fused Sentence (a type of run-on)

A fused sentence occurs when no punctuation at all separates two chunks of words that could stand alone as sentences. Correct fused sentences by

1. Adding a period
2. Adding a semicolon
3. Adding a comma followed by one of the FANBOYS (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So)
4. Making one of the stand alone chunks be unable to stand alone

Incorrect: Students must edit their papers they can find errors more easily by reading their papers backwards.

- ✓ Students must edit their papers. They can find errors more easily by reading their papers backwards.
- ✓ Students must edit their papers; they can find errors more easily by reading their papers backwards.
- ✓ Students must edit their papers, and they can find errors more easily by reading their papers backwards.
- ✓ Students must edit their papers and can find errors more easily by reading their papers backwards.

### Comma Splice (a type of run-on)

A comma splice occurs when you try to join two independent clauses with only a comma.

Correct comma splices with one of the four “fixes” as above.

- ✓ Students can't expect to find mistakes all at once. They should search for one type of mistake at a time.
- ✓ **Students can't expect to find mistakes all at once; they should search for one type of mistake at a time.**
- ✓ **Students can't expect to find mistakes all at once, so they need to search for one type of mistake at a time.**
- ✓ **Students can't expect to find mistakes all at once and should search for one type of mistake at a time.**