

Proofreading for Sentence Structure

Examples courtesy of *The Little Seagull Handbook*, 2017

Elements of a Sentence

- **Subject**
 - Names the topic of the sentence
 - The “who” or the “what”
 - Birds of many kinds fly south in the fall.
- **Predicate**
 - The action of the sentence
 - Tells us what the subject does
 - Contains a verb
 - Birds of many kinds fly south in the fall.

Subject + Predicate = Clause

All by itself = Independent Clause

Sentence Fragments: Incomplete Sentences

Missing Element Fragments

A sentence is incomplete if it is missing a subject or predicate.

- The catcher batted fifth. Fouled out, ending the inning. *No subject*
- The first two batters walked. Manny Ramirez again. *No predicate*

Subordinate Clause Fragments

Subordinating conjunctions

After	Before	That	When	Who
Although	If	Though	Where	Which
As if	Since	Unless	Whether	Why
Because	So that	Until	While	

Subordinating conjunction + subject + predicate = subordinate clause = sentence fragment

- Although the Yankees loaded the bases.

To Correct It:

- Remove the subordinating conjunction
 - The Yankees loaded the bases.
- Join it with surrounding sentences
 - Although the Yankees loaded the bases, the crowds were booing.
- Add your own subject and predicate to it.
 - Although the Yankees loaded the bases, the fans were discouraged.

Every sentence MUST have an independent clause (a subject and a predicate that are NOT attached to a subordinating conjunction.)

Coordinating Conjunction Fragments

Coordinating conjunctions

And But Yet So For

- **You can use a Comma + Conjunction to join two independent clauses.**
 - It began to rain, so the picnickers went inside.
- **You may not start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction.**
 - But the picnickers went inside.
- **To Correct It:**
 - Drop the conjunction.
 - The picnickers went inside.
 - Connect it to the previous sentence.
 - It was sunny, but the picnickers went inside.

Run-ons: “Smooshed sentences”

Sentences that have smooshed together two independent clauses without the appropriate glue.
The school board debated the issue for three days they were unable to reach an agreement.

Grammatical Glue

- Comma + Coordinating Conjunction: , and , but , so , yet , for
 - The school board debated the issue for three days, yet they were unable to reach an agreement.
- Subordinating Conjunction:
 - Although the school board debated the issue for three days, they were unable to reach an agreement.
- Semicolon (;)
 - The school board debated the issue for three days; they were unable to reach an agreement.
- Period + Capital Letter (New Sentence)
 - The school board debated the issue for three days. They were unable to reach an agreement.

Insufficient Glue: Comma

- The school board debated the issue for three days, they were unable to reach an agreement.
Don't do it!