

# 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.)**



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## 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: “Smooched sentences”

Sentences that have smooched 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!



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