



FRAGMENTS & RUN-ONS

What Are Fragments and Run-On Sentences?

Fragments and **run-on sentences** are two of the most common sentence errors in college writing. Both problems make writing difficult to understand.

- A **fragment** is an incomplete sentence.
- A **run-on sentence** is two or more complete sentences that are not joined correctly.

Understanding how to recognize and fix these errors will help you write clearer and more effective sentences.

Sentence Fragments

What Is a Fragment?

A fragment is a group of words that is missing something important, such as a subject, a verb, or a complete idea. Because of this, it does not express a full thought.

Examples of Fragments

Because students are tired.

(This is not a complete sentence—it leaves the reader waiting for more information.)

Running to class quickly.

(Missing a subject.)

The students in the library.

(Missing a verb.)

How to Fix Fragments

1. Add the missing information

Fragment: Because students are tired.

Fix: Because students are tired, they may have difficulty focusing in class.

2. Attach the fragment to a complete sentence

Fragment: Running to class quickly.

Fix: She was running to class quickly to avoid being late.

Run-on Sentences

What Is a Run-On Sentence?

A run-on sentence happens when two or more complete sentences (each with a subject and verb) are joined without correct punctuation or connections.

Examples of Run-On Sentences

- Students are busy they often feel stressed.
- Many students work long hours they have less time to study.

How to Fix Run-On Sentences

1. Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)

Run-on: Students are busy they often feel stressed.

Fix: Students are busy, so they often feel stressed.

2. Use a period to create two sentences

Run-on: Students are busy they often feel stressed.

Fix: Students are busy. They often feel stressed.

3. Use a semicolon

Run-on: Students are busy they often feel stressed.

Fix: Students are busy; they often feel stressed.

4. Use a subordinating word (because, although, while, etc.)

Run-on: Students are busy they often feel stressed.

Fix: Because students are busy, they often feel stressed.

Fragments vs. Run-Ons

Fragment:

Because students are busy.
(Incomplete idea)

Run-On:

Students are busy they feel stressed.
(Too many ideas without proper connection)

Common Causes of Fragments

- Starting a sentence with words like because, although, or when without finishing the thought
- Missing a subject or verb
- Writing a phrase instead of a complete sentence

Common Causes of Run-Ons

- Writing two complete sentences without punctuation
- Using a comma without a conjunction (comma splice)
- Trying to include too many ideas in one sentence

Tips for Avoiding These Errors

- Make sure every sentence expresses a complete idea
- Check that each sentence has a subject and a verb
- Use punctuation correctly to separate ideas
- Read your sentences out loud to hear where they sound incomplete or too long

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Comma Splice:

Incorrect: Students are tired, they need more sleep.

Fix:

Students are tired, so they need more sleep.

OR

Students are tired. They need more sleep.

Fragment Disguised as a Sentence:

Incorrect: Although students study hard.

Fix: Although students study hard, they may still struggle on exams.

Final Takeaway

If a sentence feels too short, it may be a fragment. If it feels too long or confusing, it may be a run-on. Clear, correct sentences will help your ideas come across more effectively.