

8. SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Which of the following groups of words are sentences?

1. In an old, dark cottage at the end of an autumn day.
2. Running through the town on Monday.
3. When Ann heard the angry dog.

Although the above groups of words look like sentences, you may have figured out that none of them actually is a sentence. Two of them are missing a subject and a verb, and all three of them leave you up in the air as to what is going to happen. These words are fragments—incomplete pieces of sentences.

Definition

As you learned earlier, a sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and verb and expresses a complete thought. A sentence also must begin with a capital letter and end in some type of end punctuation. A **sentence fragment**, on the other hand, is a group of words that does *not* express a complete thought. Fragments, such as the examples above, do not finish the ideas or thoughts they begin. In other words, they leave you hanging.

TYPES OF FRAGMENTS

Some sentence fragments are easy to spot because they don't contain subjects and verbs:

1. Living in the country.
2. The woman on the camel.
3. All around the tower of the church.

Other sentence fragments contain subjects and verbs but still do not express a complete thought:

1. After she finished the book.
2. Although Amy disagreed with the president.
3. Before I play the piano again.

TURNING FRAGMENTS INTO SENTENCES

Now look back at the three sentence fragments at the beginning of this lesson. Add whatever words are necessary to turn these fragments into complete sentences. Then write your sentences in the following spaces:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

SENTENCE FRAGMENT EXERCISES

A. *Directions:* In the space following each group of words, write *F* if it is a fragment and *S* if it is a sentence.

EXAMPLE: Sam didn't know what. F

1. At the beginning of the game on Tuesday. _____
2. When Mitzi arrived home from the movie. _____
3. I bought a cat yesterday. _____
4. With a gleam in her eye and a toss of her head. _____
5. Ed cried. _____
6. Why must you always on Thursday? _____
7. If I had a model train set. _____
8. Before Bea had a chance to call her name. _____
9. I suppose I haven't expressed myself clearly. _____
10. Skimming above the surface of the water a beautiful fish. _____

B. *Directions:* Rewrite the following fragments so that they are sentences. Be sure to use every word of the fragment in your sentence.

EXAMPLE: If you eat that toadstool.

If you eat that toadstool, you might die.

1. Whenever I see a grizzly bear.

2. My favorite rock performer in the world.

3. In a dusty corner at the back of the attic.

4. Running through the woods on a cold winter morning.

5. Although Janice had never been to Norway before.

6. Because I was late for my first class.

7. Hoping that the bus hadn't left without her.

8. While we were setting up your tent in the woods.

9. In the event of a flood or tornado.

10. Before you read that book about South Africa.

C. *Directions:* Read the following sentence fragments. In the space at the end of each fragment, write *yes* if the fragment contains a subject and verb and *no* if the fragment does not contain a subject and verb.

EXAMPLE: When I saw the fox. yes

1. At the end of a long day in the mountains. _____

2. Even if you do catch the frog. _____

3. Since you insist on choosing the turkey. _____

4. Above the beautiful, swift river. _____

5. On top of the bowl of cornflakes. _____

6. Swimming in the slimy river. _____

7. Through the dark tunnel out into the sunlight. _____

8. Because you do not like the mail carrier. _____

9. When Carl feeds the peacock. _____

10. In the quietest part of the recital. _____