

Sentence Problems

DIRECTIONS: Do the practice exercises in each section below **after** reading how to fix these six common grammatical errors.

ERROR 1: SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

A sentence is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb, and expresses a complete thought. A normal sentence in English will contain a subject, a verb, and an object.

EXAMPLE: **Lucy** (subject) **ran** (verb) to the store to buy **eggs** (object) for tomorrow's breakfast.

When a group of words don't form a complete sentence they are said to be a *sentence fragment*.

There are six main ways of correcting sentence fragments in your textbook:

1. Using prepositional phrases (*on* the roof, *in* the afternoon) – p. 12
2. An appositive, or word that restates, identifies or explains another word (her house, *the mansion down the road*; my brother, *Connor*) – p. 13
3. Verbs that are not the main verb in the sentence are called participial, gerund, and infinitive phrases (*to sing* the song well, *running* across the field) – p. 14
4. Compound verbs, two verbs joined by a connecting verb (*ran* and *fell*, *laughing* and *crying*) – p. 15
5. Using a connecting word such as *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which* or *that* to create an adjective clause (*what* lay ahead, *who* was there, *that* could be true) – p. 16
6. Using an adverb clause with connecting words like *because*, *although*, *when* or *if* (*although* she was late, *because* they wanted to) – p. 17

There are probably some terms here that are confusing to you, so before attempting the rest of this worksheet, you should do the Parts of Speech Review Worksheet. Ask your teacher for a copy.

PRACTICE EXERCISES:

In your notebook, do the following practice activities. Correct each of the following sentence fragments using the methods indicated.

- Practice 1 – p. 12-13 - #1-5 – Using prepositional phrases
- Practice 2 – p. 13 - #1-5 – Using appositives
- Practice 3 – p. 14 - #1-5 – Using verb phrases
- Practice 4 – p. 15-16 - #1-5 – Using compound verbs
- Practice 5 – p. 16 - #1-5 – Using adjective clauses
- Practice 6 – p. 17 - #1-5 – Using adverb clauses

ERROR 2: RUN-ON SENTENCES

A run-on sentence occurs when two or more complete sentences are joined together. This usually happens when two or more independent clauses are joined without punctuation or conjunctions.

Run-on sentences can also include comma splice errors which is when two independent clauses (sentences) are joined by commas without using a conjunction.

There are four ways to correct run-on sentences:

1. Write each of the sentences as separate sentences using appropriate punctuation and capitalization. Make two complete sentences. **Method #1**
2. Connect the two sentences with a semicolon. **Method #2**
3. Connect the two sentences with a comma or conjunction and be sure to include the comma before the conjunction. **Method #3**
4. Rewrite the two sentences making one of the two a subordinate clause or phrase using subordinating conjunctions. **Method #4**

PRACTICE EXERCISES:

Read about run-on sentences on pages 18-19 in your textbook and then do the following activities.

- Practice 1 – p. 19-20 - #1-10
- Practice 2 – p. 20 - #1-5 – Method #1
- Practice 3 – p. 21 - #1-5 – Method #2
- Practice 4 – p. 21 - #1-5 – Method #3
- Practice 5 – p. 22 - #1-5 – Method #4

ERROR 3: CHOPPY SENTENCES

When you write too many short simple sentences it can make your writing appear simple and your ideas confused. Avoid using a repetition of simple subjects. For example, when you write *He did...*, *He went*, *He said* To make your writing more effective, join your short sentences into longer connected sentences.

PRACTICE EXERCISES:

Read about choppy sentences and sentence-combining methods on pages 23-25 in your textbook and then do the following activity.

- Application – p. 27

ERROR 4: MISPLACED MODIFIERS

Modifiers are words or groups of words that describe, qualify, or otherwise identify another word or group of words. A modifier may be a single word, a phrase, or it may be a clause.

EXAMPLE:

INCORRECT: The guidebook says that one can visit the Peace Tower **on page thirty-seven**.

CORRECT: The guide book says **on page thirty-seven** that one can visit the Peace Tower.

Or

CORRECT: **On page thirty-seven** the guidebook says that one can visit the Peace Tower.

General Rules of Modifier Placement

1. Place modifiers like *almost, even, ever, hardly, just, merely, nearly, and only* immediately before the words they modify.
2. Place modifiers like *who, which, or that* immediately after the words they modify.

Special Rules of Modifier Placement

1. Avoid placing a modifier between the word *to* and the verb that follows.
2. Avoid placing a modifier between a verb and the object being modified.
3. Avoid placing a modifier between a preposition and its object.
4. Avoid separating coordinate modifiers.

PRACTICE EXERCISES: Read about misplaced modifiers on pages 42-44 in your textbook and then do the following activities.

- Practice 1 – p. 44 - #1-15
- Practice 2 – p. 45 - #1-10

ERROR 5: DANGLING AND SQUINTING MODIFIERS

A **dangling modifier** can be a word or phrase which modifies a word which is not clearly stated in a sentence. The modifier describes, clarifies, or provides more detail about a concept.

CORRECT: Having read the book, **Tim** listened to his MP3 player.

"Having read the book" states the action but does not state the doer of that action. The next sentence states that it is Tim who read the book. Therefore, the modifier "having read the book" is NOT left dangling.

INCORRECT: Having read the book, the MP3 was listened to.

"Having read the book" is a participle expressing action, but the doer is not the MP3 player (the subject of the main clause): MP3 players do not read books. Since the doer of the action expressed in the participle has not been clearly stated, the participial phrase is said to be a dangling modifier. Nobody is doing the action.

There are three ways of revising dangling modifiers:

1. State who is doing the action:

INCORRECT: Having slept in for school, a written note was required.

Who slept in? This sentence says that the written note slept in. To correct, decide who actually slept in.

CORRECT: Having slept in for school, Connor required a written note.

2. Correct the dangling phrase by making it a complete statement. Identify the doer of the action and the action:

INCORRECT: Without knowing his name, it was difficult to introduce him.

Who didn't know his name? This sentence says that "it" didn't know his name. To correct, state who was trying to introduce him.

CORRECT: Since Lucy did not know his name, it was difficult to introduce him.

3. Simply combine the phrase and main clause into one:

INCORRECT: To win more games, the drill was repeated.

Who wanted to win more games? This sentence says that the drill was trying to win more games. To correct, combine the phrase and the main clause into one sentence.

CORRECT: The team wanted to win more games, so the drill was repeated.

Squinting Modifiers are modifiers that are placed so that they could logically refer either to what comes before it or to what comes after it.

INCORRECT: The teakettle that had been whistling **noisily** boiled over.

What is the word **noisily** modifying? The way the teakettle whistled or the way the teakettle boiled over? Either would make sense. Just switch the modifier to a different location in the sentence to correct it.

CORRECT: The teakettle that had been **noisily** whistling boiled over.

CORRECT: The teakettle that had been whistling boiled **noisily** over.

PRACTICE EXERCISES: Read about **dangling and squinting modifiers** on pages 47-49 in your textbook and then do the following activities.

- Practice 1 – p. 49-50- #1-15
- Practice 2 – p. 50 - #1-5
- Practice 3 – p. 51 - #1-5

ERROR 6: FAULTY PARALLELISM

When you are writing a sentence you need to make sure that all elements are similar in meaning and expressed in parallel form. In other words all words that are linked should have the same form. By employing parallel structure the meaning of your writing will be clarified and will emphasize equally important ideas.

PRACTICE EXERCISES: Read about faulty parallelism on pages 52-53 in your textbook and then do the following activities.

- Practice 1 – p. 54 - #1-10
- Practice 2 – p. 54 - #1-5

Rewrite the following sentences correcting the faulty parallelism.

1. Connor wanted to both play the video game and getting the new movie.
2. The teachers knew about the upcoming grad pranks and that grads skipped classes.
3. In volleyball games, Maddy can serve, can set up plays, and she spikes like a pro.
4. Read each sentence, answer each question and then writes a final draft.
5. Last weekend we walked to the store, shopped for two hours and eat lunch in the food court.