



Fragment; Consider Revising

What this common Microsoft Word correction means, and how to fix it.

The term “Fragment” indicates a sentence fragment: a written sentence that is not complete and thus, is unable to stand alone as a sentence. There are several common fragments that are easy to fix in a paper.

1. *It may locate something in time and place with a prepositional phrase or a series of such phrases, but it's still lacking a proper subject-verb relationship within an independent clause:*

In Japan, during the last war and just before the armistice.

There is no subject or verb.

2. *It describes something, but there is no subject-verb relationship:*

Working far into the night in an effort to salvage her little boat.

This is a verbal phrase to modify something; the real subject of the sentence is probably the she who was working so hard.

3. *It may have most of the makings of a sentence but still be missing an important part of a verb string:*

Some of the students working in Professor Espinoza's laboratory last semester.

Remember that an -ing verb form without an auxiliary form to accompany it can never be a verb.

4. *It may have a subject-verb relationship, but it has been subordinated to another idea by a dependent word and so cannot stand by itself:*

Even though he had a better argument and was by far the more powerful speaker.

This sentence fragment has a subject, he, and two verbs, had and was, but it cannot stand by itself because of the dependent word-even though. We need an independent clause to follow up this dependent clause: . . . *the more powerful speaker, he lost the case because he didn't understand the jury.*

There are rare occasions in which fragments are considered stylistically effective. Such fragments should be used with reserve and at a writer's high discretion.

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