

- 42. Fixing Sentence Fragments
- 43. Repairing Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences
- 44. Maintaining Subject-Verb Agreement
- 45. Recognizing Problems with Verbs
- 46. Fixing Problems with Pronouns
- 47. Recognizing Problems with Adjectives and Adverbs
- 48. Special Editing Topics for Multilingual Writers

WRITING OUTCOMES

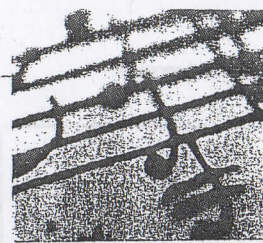
Conventions

This section will help you learn to do the following:

- Recognize the rules of standard American English grammar
- Correctly use verbs (45), pronouns (46), adjectives (47), adverbs (47), and other parts of speech
- Avoid grammatical errors commonly made by multilingual writers (48)

Test Yourself:

Take an online quiz at www.mhhe.com/bmhh to test your familiarity with the topics covered in chapters 42–48. As you read the following chapters, pay special attention to the sections that correspond to any questions you answer incorrectly.



42 Fragments

A word group that begins with a capital letter and ends with a period may not be a complete sentence. A complete sentence meets all three of the following requirements:

- A sentence names a *subject*, the who or what that the sentence addresses.
- A sentence has a complete *verb* that indicates tense, person, and number.
- A sentence includes at least one independent *clause*. An independent clause has a subject and a complete verb and does not begin with a subordinating word such as *although*, *because*, *since*, *that*, *unless*, *which*, or *while*.

In the following example, the first word group meets all three requirements and is a complete sentence. Although the second word group has a subject and a complete verb, they are part of a dependent clause that begins with the subordinating word *that*. Because the second word group does not have an independent clause with a subject and a complete verb, it is not a complete sentence.

POSSIBLE FRAGMENT

Pool hustlers deceive their opponents in many ways. For example, deliberately putting so much spin on the ball that it jumps out of the intended pocket.

You can fix fragments in one of two ways: Either transform them into sentences or attach them to a nearby independent clause.

- Pool hustlers deceive their opponents in many ways. For ^{they} example, deliberately putting so much spin on the ball that it jumps out of the intended pocket.
- Pool hustlers deceive their opponents in many ways, ^{for example, by} ~~For example,~~ deliberately putting so much spin on the ball that it jumps out of the intended pocket.

www.mhhe.com/bmhh

For information and exercises on sentence fragments, go to Editing > Sentence Fragments

42
frag

Fragments and Grammar Checkers

Grammar checkers identify some fragments, but they will not tell you what the fragment is missing or how to edit it. Grammar checkers can also miss fragments without subjects that could be interpreted as commands. Consider the following fragment from a passage about the mathematical achievements of the ancient Maya: *Develop the concept of zero, for example.*

42a Repairing dependent-clause fragments

Fragments often begin with a subordinating word such as *although, because, even though, since, so that, whenever, or whereas*. Usually, a fragment that begins with a subordinating word can be attached to a nearby independent clause.

- None of the thirty-three subjects indicated any concern

about the amount or kind of fruit the institution served/,

^{even} ~~Even~~ though all of them identified diet as an important issue.

Sometimes it is better to transform such a fragment into a complete sentence by deleting the subordinating word.

- The solidarity of our group was undermined in two ways.

^{Participants} ~~When participants~~ either disagreed about priorities or

advocated significantly different political strategies.

CHARTING the TERRITORY

Intentional Fragments

Advertisers often use attention-getting fragments: “Nothing but Net.” “Because you’re worth it.” Occasionally, you may want to use a sentence fragment for stylistic reasons. Keep in mind, however, that advertising and college writing have different contexts and purposes. In formal writing, use deliberate sentence fragments sparingly.

IDENTIFY AND EDIT
Fragments

frag

- 1. Do you see a complete verb?

Yes **No** → FRAGMENT

FRAGMENT	For example, the concept of zero.
SENTENCE	For example, they were among the first to develop the concept of zero.

(Note: In the original image, 'subj' and 'verb' are written above 'they' and 'develop' respectively in the sentence.)

- 2. Do you see a subject?

Yes **No** → FRAGMENT

FRAGMENT	Developed the concept of zero, for example.
SENTENCE	They developed the concept of zero, for example.

(Note: In the original image, 'subj' and 'verb' are written above 'They' and 'developed' respectively in the sentence.)

- 3. Do you see only a dependent clause?

No Yes → FRAGMENT

FRAGMENT	Because they were among the earliest people to develop the concept of zero.
SENTENCE	The Mayas deserve a place in the history of mathematics because they were among the earliest people to develop the concept of zero.

SENTENCE

Exercise 42.1 Editing to repair dependent-clause fragments

Correct the dependent-clause fragments in the following items by attaching them to a sentence or by eliminating or replacing the subordinating word.

EXAMPLE

The most commonly traded stone in Mesopotamia was
which
obsidian/, ~~Which~~ is black, volcanic, and glasslike.

42a
frag

1. Ancient people traded salt. Which is an important nutrient.
2. Some groups resorted to war and conquest. Because they wanted to gain control over valuable goods and resources.
3. When they could, people transported large stones by river. Since doing so required less effort than other means of moving them.
4. Obsidian is hard and makes a sharp edge. Even though it is brittle.
5. After a while, a type of currency developed. When traders began exchanging silver bars or rings.
6. The earliest writing appeared in Mesopotamia. After people there began living in cities.
7. Agriculture thrived in Egypt. Because the Nile flooded regularly.
8. Although the Egyptians had abundant crops and large supplies of limestone. They imported many goods.
9. Egypt added gold objects to its lengthy list of exports. After its artisans began to work the precious metal in about 4000 BCE.
10. Egypt's first king was Menes. Who united the country by conquest in about 3150 BCE.

42b Repairing phrase fragments

Often unintentional fragments are **phrases**, word groups that lack a subject or a complete verb or both and usually function as modifiers or nouns. Phrase fragments frequently begin with **verbals**—words derived from verbs, such as *putting* or *to put*.

FRAGMENT That summer, we had the time of our lives.
*Fishing in the early morning, splashing in the
lake after lunch, exploring the woods before
dinner, and playing Scrabble until bedtime.*

One way to fix this fragment is to transform it into an independent clause with its own subject and verb:

➤ That summer, we had the time of our lives. ^{We fished} ~~Fishing~~ in the
^{splashed} early morning, ~~splashing~~ in the lake after lunch, ^{explored} ~~exploring~~
^{played} the woods before dinner, and ~~playing~~ Scrabble until bedtime.

Another way to fix the problem is to attach the fragment to the part of the previous sentence that it modifies (in this case, *the time of our lives*).

➤ That summer, we had the time of our lives, ^{fishing} ~~Fishing~~ in the
early morning, splashing in the lake after lunch, exploring
the woods before dinner, and playing Scrabble until bedtime.

Phrase fragments can also begin with one-word prepositions such as *as*, *at*, *by*, *for*, *from*, *in*, *of*, *on*, or *to*. To correct these, it is usually easiest to attach them to a nearby sentence.

➤ Impressionist painters often depicted their subjects in
everyday situations, ^{at} ~~At~~ a restaurant, perhaps, or by the
seashore.

Exercise 42.2 Identifying fragments

Underline the fragments in the following passage, and identify each as either a phrase (without a subject or verb) or a dependent clause.

EXAMPLE I am headed to the library tonight.
dependent clause
Because I have a paper due.

Pool hustlers deceive their opponents in many ways. Sometimes appearing unfamiliar with the rules of the game. They may try acting as if they are drunk. Or pretend to be inept. For example, they will put so much spin on the ball that it jumps out of the intended pocket. So their opponents will be tricked into betting. Some other ways to cheat. When their opponents are not looking, pool hustlers may remove their own balls from the table. Then change the position of the balls on the table. Because today's pool balls have metallic cores. Hustlers can use electromagnets to affect the path of the balls. Be aware of these tricks!

Exercise 42.3 Editing to repair phrase fragments

Repair the phrase fragments in the items that follow by attaching them to a sentence or adding words to turn them into sentences.

EXAMPLE

Film music can create a mood/^{such} ~~Such~~ as romantic,
lighthearted, or mysterious.

1. The ominous music prepares us for a shocking scene. And confuses us when the shock does not come.
2. Filmmakers may try to evoke nostalgic feelings. By choosing songs from a particular era.
3. The musical producer used a mix of traditional songs and new compositions. In the Civil War drama *Cold Mountain*.
4. Usually, filmmakers edit the images first and add music later. To be sure that the music supports the visual elements.
5. Music can provide transitions between scenes. Marking the passage of time, signaling a change of place, or foreshadowing a shift in mood.
6. Exactly matching the rhythms of the music to the movement on screen is known as "Mickey Mousing." After the animated classic.
7. To create atmosphere, filmmakers sometimes use sounds from nature. Such as crashing waves, bird calls, and moaning winds.
8. Do not underestimate the effect of a short "dead track," the complete absence of sound. Forcing us to look intently at the image.

42c Repairing other types of fragments

Word groups that start with transitions or with words that introduce examples, appositives, lists, and compound predicates can also cause problems.

1. Word groups that start with transitions

Some fragments start with two- or three-word prepositions that function as transitions, such as *as well as*, *as compared with*, *except for*, *in addition to*, *in contrast with*, *in spite of*, or *instead of*.

- For sixty-five years, the growth in consumer spending has been both steep and steady/^{as} ~~As~~ compared with the growth

in gross domestic product (GDP), which has fluctuated significantly.

2. Words and phrases that introduce examples

It is always a good idea to check word groups beginning with *for example*, *like*, *specifically*, or *such as*.

- Elizabeth I of England faced many dangers as a princess.

For example, ^{she fell} ~~falling~~ out of favor with her sister, Queen Mary,
^{was} ~~and being~~ imprisoned in the Tower of London.

3. Appositives

An **appositive** is a noun or noun phrase that renames a noun or pronoun.

- In 1965, Lyndon Johnson increased the number of troops in

Vietnam/^a ~~A~~ former French colony in southeast Asia.

4. Lists

Usually, you can connect a list to the preceding sentence using a colon. If you want to emphasize the list, consider using a dash instead.

- In the 1930s, three great band leaders helped popularize

jazz/[:] Louis Armstrong, Benny Goodman, and Duke Ellington.

5. Compound predicates

A **compound predicate** is made up of at least two verbs as well as their objects and modifiers, connected by a coordinating conjunction such as *and*, *but*, or *or*. The parts of a compound predicate have the same subject and should be together in one sentence.

- The group gathered at dawn at the base of the mountain/
^{and} ~~And~~ assembled their gear in preparation for the morning's climb.

30. Avoiding Wordiness
31. Adding Missing Words
32. Unscrambling Mixed Constructions
33. Fixing Confusing Shifts
34. Using Parallel Constructions
35. Fixing Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers
36. Using Coordination and Subordination Effectively
37. Varying Your Sentences
38. Choosing Active Verbs
39. Using Appropriate Language
40. Using Exact Language
41. Glossary of Usage

WRITING OUTCOMES

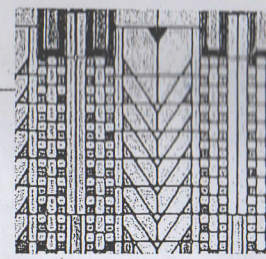
Processes and Conventions

This section will help you learn to do the following:

- Revise your sentences for clarity by using subordination appropriately (36), choosing exact language (40), and fixing problems such as wordiness (30), mixed constructions (31), and misplaced modifiers (35)
- Apply standard American English constructions to your writing (32)
- Use appropriate language that clearly expresses your intended meaning (39–40)

Test Yourself:

Take an online quiz at www.mhhe.com/bmhh to test your familiarity with the topics covered in chapters 30–41. As you read the following chapters, pay special attention to the sections that correspond to any questions you answer incorrectly.



A sentence does not have to be short and simple to be concise, but every word in it must count.

Wordiness and Grammar Checkers

Most computer grammar checkers recognize many wordy structures, but inconsistently so. One style checker flagged most passive verbs and some *it is* and *there are* (expletive) constructions, but not others. It also flagged the redundant expression *true fact* but missed *round circle* and the empty phrase *it is a fact that*.

30a Eliminating redundancies and unnecessary modifiers

Be on the lookout for redundancies such as *first and foremost*, *full and complete*, *past history*, and *blue in color*.

- ~~Students living in close proximity in the dorms need to cooperate together if they want to live in harmony.~~

Usually, modifiers such as *very*, *rather*, and *really* and intensifiers such as *absolutely*, *definitely*, and *incredibly* can be deleted.

- ~~The ending definitely shocked us very much.~~

30b Replacing wordy phrases

Make your sentences more concise by replacing wordy phrases with appropriate alternatives.

- ~~It is necessary at this point in time that tests be run for the purposes of measuring the switch's strength.~~
- Tests must now
to measure*

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For information on and practice eliminating redundancies, go to

Editing > Eliminating Redundancies

30b

W

Concise Alternatives

then	at that point in time
now	due to the fact that
because	for the reason that
because	in close proximity to
near	in order to
to	in spite of the fact that
although	in the event that
if	in the not-too-distant future
soon	is able to
can	is necessary that
must	

Wordy Phrases

Exercise 30.1 Identifying and editing wordy or empty phrases and unnecessary repetition

Eliminate wordy or empty phrases and unnecessary repetition to make the following sentences concise.

EXAMPLE

~~The truth is that the time of the rainy season in Hawaii is from the month of November to the month of March.~~

1. Charlotte Perkins Gilman was first and foremost known as a woman who was a champion of women's rights.
2. She was born on the date July 3, 1860, in the city of Hartford, which is in the state of Connecticut.
3. Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," a novella about the holy matrimony of marriage and a state of madness, still speaks to contemporary readers in this present day and age.
4. The leading female heroine in Gilman's story is diagnosed by her physician husband as having an illness that is mental in origin.
5. Gilman wrote and published her book *Women and Economics* in the year 1898 and then published her book *Concerning Children* in the year 1900.

30C Editing roundabout sentences

Eliminate expletive constructions like *there is, there are, and it is*, re-
place the static verbs *be* and *have* with active verbs, and beware of
overusing nouns derived from verbs.

The

- ~~There are stylistic similarities between "This Lime-Tree Bower" and "Tintern Abbey" which are indications of the influence that Coleridge had on Wordsworth.~~

- ~~The film *JFK*, which was directed by Oliver Stone, revived interest in the conspiracy theory.~~

Often, you can reduce phrases to single words.

- ~~Oliver Stone's film *JFK* revived interest in the conspiracy theory.~~

Because of a cold front from Canada, the meteorologist on Channel 7 is predicting a major storm is expected in the western part of the state,

~~A cold front is coming in from Canada. The meteorologist on Channel 7 is predicting high winds and heavy rain.~~

Exercise 30.2 Writing straightforward sentences

Use the techniques described in this chapter to make each of the following passages into a single concise sentence.

EXAMPLE

The play opened on October 1. There were many reviews in which critics gave it a pan. The public loathed it too, which is why it closed after a run of less than two weeks. The play opened on October 1, but critics panned it, the public loathed it, and it closed after a run of less than two weeks.

1. There are many concerns that environmentalists have about whether genetically modified food products are absolutely safe for the environment.

IDENTIFY AND EDIT Wordy Sentences

W

To make your writing concise, ask yourself these questions as you edit your writing:

1. Do any sentences contain wordy or empty phrases such as *at this point in time*? Do any of them contain redundancies or other unnecessary repetitions?

- ~~The fact is that at this point in time~~ ^{More} more women than men ^{now} attend college.
- Total college enrollments have increased steadily ^{upward} since the 1940s, but since the 1970s women have enrolled in greater numbers than men ~~have~~.

2. Can any clauses be reduced to phrases, or phrases to single words? Can any sentences be combined to reduce repetitive information?

- ~~Reports that come from college officials indicate that~~ ^{College} applications from women ^{report} exceed those from men/~~This pattern indicates that~~ ^{indicating} women will continue to outnumber men in college.

3. Do any sentences include *there is*, *or there are*, or *it is* expressions; *weak verbs*; or *nouns derived from verbs*?

- ~~In 1970, there were more than 1.5 million more men in college than women.~~ ^{men outnumbered women in college by}
- This trend ^{reflects} is a reflection of broad changes in gender roles throughout American society.

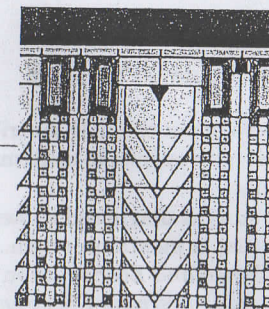
2. Soybeans that are genetically engineered are very resistant to certain artificially made herbicides. These beans are also very resistant to certain artificially made insecticides.
3. These soybeans, which are resistant, permit the use of larger quantities of herbicides by farmers than before.
4. The herbicides kill surrounding plants. They also kill insects that are not considered pests, such as the Monarch butterfly.

5. There are also concerns from consumers about the handling of genetically modified soy crops. One of these concerns is that the genetically modified soy crops are not segregated from soy crops that have not been genetically modified.

Exercise 30.3 Chapter review: Revising wordy sentences

Use the techniques described in this chapter to make the following passage concise.

In this day and age, people definitely should take preventive precautions to prevent identity theft from happening to them. Identity thieves have the ability to use someone else's personal information to commit fraud or theft, such as opening a fraudulent credit card account. Identity thieves also have the capacity to create counterfeit checks. This type of theft is often done in such a clever manner that often the victim of identity theft never realizes that his or her identity has been stolen. People whose identity has been stolen should first and foremost contact the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for the purpose of disputing fraudulent charges. There is also the fact that people should learn how they can minimize the chance that they will face the risk of becoming a victim of this type of crime.



31 Adding Missing Words

Do not omit words the reader needs to understand your sentence.

31a Adding needed words to compound structures

For conciseness, words can sometimes be omitted from compound structures: *His anger is extreme and his behavior [is] violent*. But do not leave out part of a compound structure unless both parts of the compound are the same.