

Common Sentence Errors

Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences and usually consist of dependent clauses, phrases, or any other word group that does not make a complete thought.

Fragments may be corrected by adding the missing element of the sentence. Often, two sentences fragments may be joined, making the sentence complete

Example:

Incorrect: "When he returned, Jesus found his disciples sleeping. Saying to the disciples 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come.'" (MK 14:41) "Saying to the disciples" is only a phrase and thus does not contain a subject and verb.

Correct this by adding the missing sentence element: "When he returned, Jesus found his disciples sleeping and said: 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come.'" (MK 14:41)

Comma Splices

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined by a comma, but lack a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, but, for, yet, so).

Repair a comma splice by adding a conjunction that demonstrates the proper relationship of the clauses or the appropriate punctuation (often a semi-colon, colon or dash).

Example

Incorrect: "Reinhold Niebur's family situation was an important influence on his theological development, his father was a pastor and his mother was the daughter of a pastor, they had an extensive library which Reinhold, as a child, often perused." This sentence has three independent clauses connected together with commas.

Correct this by adding the missing element "Reinhold Niebur's family situation was an important influence on his theological development; his father was a pastor and his mother was the daughter of a pastor. They had an extensive library which Reinhold, as a child, often perused." (I made these two sentences by adding the semi-colon and a period)

Fused Sentences

A fused sentence occurs when two independent causes have neither punctuation nor a conjunction between them.

Example:

Incorrect: Not all ministers are good pastors not all pastors are good ministers.

Correct this by adding a comma and a conjunction

Not all ministers are good pastors, and not all pastors are good ministers.

Fused sentences may also be corrected by writing two sentences, by using either a semicolon or a comma and a conjunction, or by making one of the sentences into a dependent clause.

Examples

Not all ministers are good pastors. Not all pastors are good ministers.

Not all ministers are good pastors: not all pastors are good ministers.

Just like not all ministers are good pastors, not all pastors are good ministers.