The Write Stuff

Grabbling with Grammar & Sentence Fragments

Sentence Fragments

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS ARE GROUPS OF WORDS (PHRASES OR DEPENDENT CLAUSES) THAT MASQUERADE AS SENTENCES.

Masquerading?!?

mas·quer·ade

/ məsˈkærəd/ n.

verb

masqueraded 

masquerading

present participle: masquerading

pretend to be someone or not to be oneself

"a person masquerading as a king"

"a woman masquerading as a man"

be disguised or passed off as something else

"the idea that masquerades as news in some local papers"

A Fragment Illustrated

"Because the rental truck accidently knocked down the power pole."

The dependent clause above obviously is a fragment. The thought is incomplete.

The Origin of the Sentence Fragment

Hey, don’t!

THE FIRST SENTENCE FRAGMENT
1. Dependent Clauses standing alone

- **Incorrect**: The umpire refused to reverse his decision. Although the replay showed the umpire was completely out of position to make the call.

- **Correct**: The umpire refused to reverse his decision, although the replay showed the umpire was completely out of position to make the call.

2. Participial phrases (ing)

- **Incorrect**: Joe was unable to get a managerial position. Having dropped out of school in the ninth grade.

- **Correct**: Having dropped out of school in the ninth grade, Joe was unable to get a managerial position.

3. Noun Fragments (clauses)

- Did someone say “Clauses?!?!”

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- Becky overstepped and missed her Old Testament final exam. Having stayed up until 2 AM studying with her friends.

- In context, however, fragments make sense and blend in with the surrounding sentences.
3. Noun Fragments (clauses)

- **Incorrect:** Sam is honest and courageous. A man who will stand up for the truth despite danger to himself.

A group of words that begins with a noun that repeats and emphasizes a noun in the previous sentence—the noun in the fragment is often followed by a clause beginning with *who, which, or that*.  

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Relative Pronouns: *Who, which, that*

- **Incorrect:** Sam is honest and courageous. A man who will stand up for the truth despite danger to himself.

- **Correct:** Sam is honest and courageous, a man who will stand up for the truth despite danger to himself.

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