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Sentence Fragment

**PROBLEM 1**

*Fragment that lacks a subject*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>frag</th>
<th>Martha asked about dinner. <strong>Hoped it was lasagna.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frag</td>
<td>I jogged around the park twice. <strong>Was hot and tired afterward.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frag</td>
<td>Li Cheng raced to the bus stop. <strong>Arrived just in the nick of time.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOLUTION**

Martha asked about dinner. She hoped it was lasagna.
I jogged around the park twice. I was hot and tired afterward.
Li Cheng raced to the bus stop. He arrived just in the nick of time.

Make a complete sentence by adding a subject to the fragment.

**PROBLEM 2**

*Fragment that lacks a predicate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>frag</th>
<th>The carpenter worked hard all morning. <strong>His assistant after lunch.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frag</td>
<td>Ant farms are fascinating. <strong>The ants around in constant motion.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frag</td>
<td>Our class went on a field trip. <strong>Mammoth Cave.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Problem 3**

*Fragment that lacks both a subject and a predicate*

I heard the laughter of the children. **(In the nursery)**

After the spring rain, **(The whole house smelled fresh and clean)**.

The noisy chatter of the squirrels awakened us early. **(In the morning)**.

**Solution**

I heard the laughter of the children in the nursery.

After the spring rain, the whole house smelled fresh and clean.

The noisy chatter of the squirrels awakened us early in the morning.

Combine the fragment with another sentence.

*More help in avoiding sentence fragments is available in Lesson 5.*
Run-on Sentence

**PROBLEM 1**

*Two main clauses separated only by a comma*

run-on  Extra crackers are available, they are next to the salad bar.
run-on  Hurdles are Sam’s specialty, he likes them best.

**SOLUTION A**

Extra crackers are available. They are next to the salad bar.
Make two sentences by separating the first clause from the second with end punctuation, such as a period or a question mark, and starting the second sentence with a capital letter.

**SOLUTION B**

Hurdles are Sam’s specialty; he likes them best.
Place a semicolon between the main clauses of the sentence.

**PROBLEM 2**

*Two main clauses with no punctuation between them*

run-on  The law student studied hard she passed her exam.
run-on  Kamil looked for the leash he found it in the closet.
**SOLUTION A**

The law student studied hard. She passed her exam.

Make two sentences out of the run-on sentence.

**SOLUTION B**

Kamil looked for the leash, and he found it in the closet.

Add a comma and a coordinating conjunction between the main clauses.

---

**PROBLEM 3**

*Two main clauses without a comma before the coordinating conjunction*

- **run-on** You can rollerskate like a pro but you cannot ice skate.
- **run-on** Julian gazed at the moon and he marveled at its brightness.

**SOLUTION**

You can rollerskate like a pro, but you cannot ice skate.

Julian gazed at the moon, and he marveled at its brightness.

Add a comma before the coordinating conjunction.

---

*More help in avoiding run-on sentences is available in Lesson 6.*
**Lack of Subject-Verb Agreement**

**PROBLEM 1**

*A subject separated from the verb by an intervening prepositional phrase*

- agr  The stories in the newspaper *was* well written.
- agr  The house in the suburbs *were* just what she wanted.

**SOLUTION**

The stories in the newspaper *were* well written.
The house in the suburbs *was* just what she wanted.

Make sure that the verb agrees with the subject of the sentence, not with the object of a preposition. The object of a preposition is never the subject.

**PROBLEM 2**

*A sentence that begins with here or there*

- agr  Here *go* the duck with her ducklings.
- agr  There *is* the pencils you were looking for.
- agr  Here *is* the snapshots from our vacation to the Grand Canyon.
Here goes the duck with her ducklings.
There are the pencils you were looking for.
Here are the snapshots from our vacation to the Grand Canyon.

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, look for the subject after the verb. Make sure that the verb agrees with the subject.

**PROBLEM 3**

*An indefinite pronoun as the subject*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>agr</th>
<th>Each of the animals<em>have</em> a unique way of walking.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agr</td>
<td>Many of the movies<em>was</em> black and white.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agr</td>
<td>None of the leaves<em>is</em> turning colors yet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOLUTION**

Each of the animals has a unique way of walking.
Many of the movies were black and white.
None of the leaves are turning colors yet.

Some indefinite pronouns are singular, some are plural, and some can be either singular or plural. Determine whether the indefinite pronoun is singular or plural, and make the verb agree.
**Problem 4**

A compound subject that is joined by and

- The students and the teacher \( adores \) the classroom hamster.
- The expert and best source of information \( are \) Dr. Marlin.

**Solution A**

The students and the teacher adore the classroom hamster.

Use a plural verb if the parts of the compound subject do not belong to one unit or if they refer to different people or things.

**Solution B**

The expert and best source of information is Dr. Marlin.

Use a singular verb if the parts of the compound subject belong to one unit or if they refer to the same person or thing.

**Problem 5**

A compound subject that is joined by or or nor

- Either Hester or Sue \( are \) supposed to pick us up.
- Neither pepper nor spices \( improves \) the flavor of this sauce.
- Either Caroline or Robin \( volunteer \) at the local food pantry.
- Neither the coach nor the screaming fans \( agree \) with the referee’s call.
**SOLUTION**

Either Hester or Sue is supposed to pick us up.
Neither pepper nor spices improve the flavor of this sauce.
Either Caroline or Robin volunteers at the local food pantry.
Neither the coach nor the screaming fans agree with the referee’s call.

Make the verb agree with the subject that is closer to it.

---

*More help with subject-verb agreement is available in Lessons 50–54.*
**Incorrect Verb Tense or Form**

**Problem 1**

*An incorrect or missing verb ending*

- **tense** We talk yesterday for more than an hour.
- **tense** They sail last month for Barbados.
- **tense** Sally and James land at the airport yesterday.

**Solution**

We talked yesterday for more than an hour.
They sailed last month for Barbados.
Sally and James landed at the airport yesterday.

To form the past tense and the past participle, add *-ed* to a regular verb.

**Problem 2**

*An improperly formed irregular verb*

- **tense** Our hair cling to us in the humid weather.
- **tense** Trent drank all the orange juice.
- **tense** The evening breeze blew the clouds away.
Our hair clung to us in the humid weather.
Trent drank all the orange juice.
The evening breeze blew the clouds away.

Irregular verbs vary in their past and past participle forms. Look up the ones you are not sure of. Consider memorizing them if you feel it is necessary.

**PROBLEM 3**

*Confusion between a verb’s past form and its past participle*

**tense** Helen has took first place in the marathon.

**SOLUTION**

Helen has taken first place in the marathon.

Use the past participle form of an irregular verb, and not its past form, when you use the auxiliary verb *have*.

*More help with correct verb forms is available in Lessons 16–21.*
Incorrect Use of Pronouns

PROBLEM 1

A pronoun that refers to more than one antecedent

The wind and the rain came suddenly, but **it** did not last.

Henry ran with Philip, but **he** was faster.

When Sarah visits Corinne, **she** is glad for the company.

**SOLUTION**

The wind and the rain came suddenly, but the rain did not last.

Henry ran with Philip, but Philip was faster.

When Sarah visits Corinne, Corinne is glad for the company.

Substitute a noun for the pronoun to make your sentence clearer.

PROBLEM 2

Personal pronouns as subjects

Him and Mary unfurled the tall, white sail.

Nina and **them** bought theater tickets yesterday.

Karen and **me** heard the good news on the television.
**SOLUTION**

He and Mary unfurled the tall, white sail.
Nina and they bought theater tickets yesterday.
Karen and I heard the good news on the television.
Use a subject pronoun as the subject part of a sentence.

**PROBLEM 3**

*Personal pronouns as objects*

- The horse galloped across the field to Anne and **I**.
- The new signs confused Clark and **them**.
- Grant wrote **her** a letter of apology.

**SOLUTION**

The horse galloped across the field to Anne and me.
The new signs confused Clark and them.
Grant wrote her a letter of apology.
An object pronoun is the object of a verb or preposition.

*More help with correct use of pronouns is available in Lessons 22–27.*
Incorrect Use of Adjectives

**PROBLEM 1**

*Incorrect use of good, better, best*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>adj</th>
<th>Is a horse more good than a pony?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adj</td>
<td>Literature is my most good subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOLUTION**

*Is a horse better than a pony?*

*Literature is my best subject.*

The words *better* and *best* are the comparative and superlative forms of the word *good*. Do not use the words *more* or *most* before the irregular forms of comparative and superlative adjectives.

**PROBLEM 2**

*Incorrect use of bad, worse, worst*

| adj | That game was the baddest game our team ever played. |

**SOLUTION**

*That game was the worst game our team ever played.*

Do not use the suffixes -er or -est after the irregular forms of comparative and superlative adjectives. Do not use the words *more* or *most* before the irregular forms of comparative and superlative adjectives.
**PROBLEM 3**

_Incorrect use of comparative adjectives_

\[
\text{adj} \quad \text{This bike is more faster than my old bike.}
\]

**SOLUTION**

This bike is faster than my old bike.

Do not use _-er and more_ together.

**PROBLEM 4**

_Incorrect use of superlative adjectives_

\[
\text{adj} \quad \text{Kara said it was the most biggest lawn she ever had to mow.}
\]

**SOLUTION**

Kara said it was the biggest lawn she ever had to mow.

Do not use _-est and most_ together.

*More help with the correct use of adjectives is available in Lessons 28–32.*
**Incorrect Use of Commas**

**PROBLEM 1**

*Missing commas in a series of three or more items*

- We saw ducks, geese, and seagulls at the park.
- Jake ate dinner, watched a movie, and visited friends.

**SOLUTION**

We saw ducks, geese, and seagulls at the park.
Jake ate dinner, watched a movie, and visited friends.

If there are three or more items in a series, use a comma after each item except the last one.

**PROBLEM 2**

*Missing commas with direct quotations*

- “The party,” said José, “starts at seven o’clock.”
- “My new book,” Roger exclaimed, “is still on the bus!”
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SOLUTION

“The party,” said José, “starts at seven o’clock.”
“My new book,” Roger exclaimed, “is still on the bus!”

If a quotation is interrupted, the first part ends with a comma followed by quotation marks. The interrupting words are also followed by a comma.

PROBLEM 3

Missing commas with nonessential appositives

Maria our new friend is from Chicago.
The old lane a tree-lined gravel path is a great place to walk on a hot afternoon.

SOLUTION

Maria, our new friend, is from Chicago.
The old lane, a tree-lined gravel path, is a great place to walk on a hot afternoon.

Decide whether the appositive is truly essential to the meaning of the sentence. If it is not essential, set it off with commas.
PROBLEM 4

**Missing commas with nonessential adjective clauses**

Karen who started early finished with her work before noon.

**SOLUTION**

Karen, who started early, finished with her work before noon.

Decide whether the clause is truly essential to the meaning of the sentence. If it is not essential, then set it off with commas.

PROBLEM 5

**Missing commas with introductory adverb clauses**

When the wind rises too high the boats lower their sails.

**SOLUTION**

When the wind rises too high, the boats lower their sails.

Place a comma after an introductory adverbial clause.

*More help with commas is available in Lessons 73–77.*
Incorrect Use of Apostrophes

PROBLEM 1

_Singular possessive nouns_

apos Pablo’s new bicycle is in Charles’s yard.
apos Bill’s video collection is really great.
apos That horse’s saddle has real silver on it.

**SOLUTION**

Pablo’s new bicycle is in Charles’s yard.
Bill’s video collection is really great.
That horse’s saddle has real silver on it.

Place an apostrophe before a final -s to form the possessive of a singular noun, even one that ends in -s.

PROBLEM 2

_Plural possessive nouns that end in -s_

apos The girls’ team won the tournament.
apos The boats’ sails are very colorful against the blue sky.
apos The model cars’ boxes are in my room.
PROBLEM 3

Plural possessive nouns that do not end in -s

apos  The deers best habitat is a deep, unpopulated woodland.
apos  The childrens clothes are on the third floor.

SOLUTION
The deer’s best habitat is a deep, unpopulated woodland.
The children’s clothes are on the third floor.
When a plural noun does not end in -s, use an apostrophe and an -s to form the possessive of the noun.

PROBLEM 4

Possessive personal pronouns

apos  The poster is her’s but the magazine is their’s.
PROBLEM 5

Confusion between its and it’s

SOLUTION

The old tree was the last to lose its leaves.

It’s the best CD I have ever heard them put out.

Use an apostrophe to form the contraction of it is. The possessive of the personal pronoun it does not take an apostrophe.

More help with apostrophes and possessives is available in Lessons 10 and 82.
PROBLEM 1
Words that refer to ethnic groups, nationalities, and languages

Many Irish citizens speak both English and Gaelic.

SOLUTION
Many Irish citizens speak both English and Gaelic.
Capitalize proper nouns and adjectives referring to ethnic groups, nationalities, and languages.

PROBLEM 2
The first word of a direct quotation

Yuri said, “The rain off the bay always blows this way.”

SOLUTION
Yuri said, “The rain off the bay always blows this way.”
Capitalize the first word of a direct quotation if it is a complete sentence. A direct quotation is the speaker’s exact words.

More help with capitalization is available in Lessons 68–71.