

BUILDING WITH THE BASICS: Grammar and Punctuation

CLEANING UP THE CONSTRUCTION SITE ✂ FRAGMENTS, COMMA SPLICES, AND RUN-ONS

Sentence structure must be cleaned up just as a construction site should be.

If writers build sloppy clauses, they can write serious grammar errors like fragments, comma splices, or run-ons.

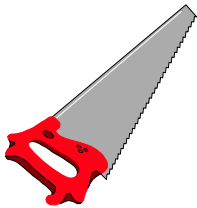


FRAGMENTS

Fragments are like pieces of construction materials that writers saw off incorrectly.

In writing, a fragment is an incomplete sentence lacking a subject, a verb, or both as a phrase. Or a fragment can contain a subject and a verb but as a dependent clause needing an independent clause for support like a lean-to.

Which is the sawed-off fragment in the groups of words below?



The breakfast meeting needs refreshments. Sweet rolls, orange juice, and decaf coffee.

The IRS appreciates us. Because we disburse our taxes on time and without complaint.

You can clean up a fragment three ways:

1. **Give the fragment its own subject and verb** to make it a sentence.

The breakfast meeting needs refreshments. **We suggest** sweet rolls, orange juice, and decaf coffee.

2. **Eliminate the subordinating conjunction** from the dependent clause to make it an independent clause (a sentence).

The IRS appreciates us. **We** disburse our taxes on time and without complaint.

3. **Join the fragment** to the sentence in front of it.

The breakfast meeting needs **refreshments: sweet rolls**, orange juice, and decaf coffee.

The IRS appreciates **us because** we disburse our taxes on time and without complaint.