Fragments

What is a fragment? A fragment is a broken idea. It is a sentence that is missing one of its parts—either a subject or a predicate.

Sentences are made up of two parts: a subject and a predicate.

- A subject is what the sentence is about: a person, place, thing, or idea (noun). Example: This potion
- A predicate tells something about the subject. Example: will shrink an item to

In order to be complete, a sentence has to have both a subject and a predicate. Otherwise it is a fragment (incomplete sentence).

Examples

- “Harry flew around the Quidditch pitch on his broomstick.”
  - The subject of the sentence is Harry.
  - The predicate (what about Harry?) is flew around the Quidditch pitch on his broomstick.
  - Because the sentence has both a subject and a predicate, it is a complete sentence!

- “The parchment sprinkled with glitter.”
  - The subject of the sentence is parchment.
  - There is no predicate. Although sprinkled is a verb, the paper is not the one doing the sprinkling. Sprinkled with glitter modifies the noun (parchment)
  - Because the sentence is missing a predicate, it is a fragment.

One way to help check for completeness is to turn the phrase into a question and see if it answers itself.

- “The parchment sprinkled with glitter.”
  - Question: What about the parchment that is sprinkled with glitter?
  - There is no answer, so it is a fragment.

- “Leaving in the middle of potions class.”
  - Question: Who is leaving in the middle of potions class?
  - There is no answer, so it is a fragment.

- “Hermione always does her homework faster than Ron.”
  - Question: Who does homework faster than Ron?
  - Answer: Hermione.
  - Since the question can be answered, this is a complete sentence.
Test your knowledge on Fragments!

Instructions: Identify if the following examples are fragments or sentences. If it is a fragment, correct it to make a complete sentence.

1. Which is why Amelia Bones became Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement in the first place.
2. Bathsheda Babbling cleaned out her classroom cupboard. Once in the autumn and once in the spring.
3. The broomstick, which was polished to perfection.
4. Draco Malfoy was chosen to be Slytherin’s Quidditch Seeker.

Answers!

1. Which is why Amelia Bones became Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement in the first place.
   a. The easiest way to check this phrase would be to turn it into a question: “Why did Amelia Bones become head of the department?” Since the phrase doesn’t answer this question, it is a fragment.
   b. This is one way to turn the fragment into a sentence: No other contestants had a law degree, which is why Amelia Bones became Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement in the first place.
2. Bathsheda Babbling cleaned out her classroom cupboard. Once in the autumn and once in the spring.
   a. The first sentence is complete; however, the fragment following the complete sentence is incomplete. “Once in the autumn and once in the spring” is missing a subject.
   b. This could be changed to an independent clause and a parenthetical phrase (one complete sentence) or two complete sentences: Bathsheda Babbling cleaned out her classroom cupboard, once in the autumn and once in the spring. OR Bathsheda Babbling cleaned out her classroom cupboard. She limited the cleaning to once in the autumn and once in the spring.
3. The broomstick, which was polished to perfection.
   a. This fragment has a subject (the broomstick) but no predicate; it is incomplete. Which was polished to perfection is a parenthetical phrase modifying the subject (the broomstick).
   b. A possible solution to this fragment could be: The broomstick, which was polished to perfection, cost 300 Galleons.
4. Draco Malfoy was chosen to be Slytherin’s Quidditch Seeker.
   a. This sentence has both a subject (Draco Malfoy) and a predicate (was chosen to be Slytherin’s Quidditch Seeker). The predicate answers the question “What about the subject?” It is complete.
5. Dobby with a stack of hats on his head that are about to fall over.
   a. Although there is a subject and a verb, this is a fragment because the verb phrase (are about to fall over) is linked to the noun that is in the parenthetical phrase (with a stack of hats on his head that are about to fall over) and not to the subject (Dobby). This fragment is composed of the subject but no predicate. There is no answer to the question, “What about Dobby?”
   b. One solution would be to change with to has or had: Dobby has a stack of hats on his head that are about to fall over. This is complete and answers the question “What about the subject?”
   c. Another solution would be to add a predicate after the parenthetical phrase: Dobby, with a stack of hats on his head that are about to fall over, was hoping Harry would praise him.

Harry Potter Illustrations References:


5. “Dobby, with a stack of hats on his head that are about to fall over.” (complete or fragment?)