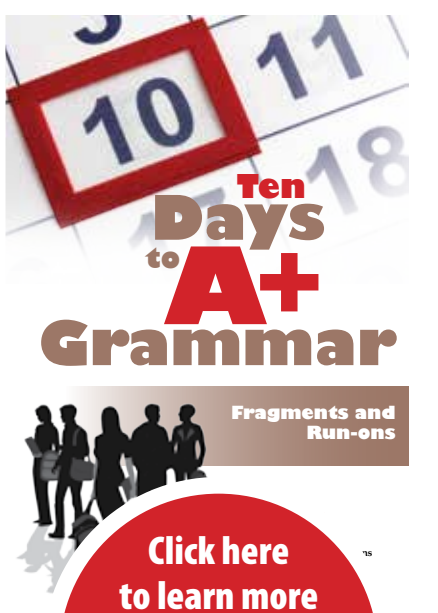




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# Ten Days to A+ Grammar

**Fragments and Run-ons**



by Cheryl Miller Thurston



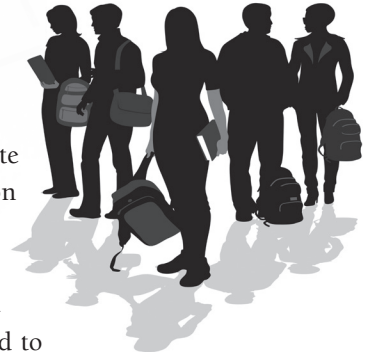
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## Introduction



**T**EN DAYS TO A+ GRAMMAR: FRAGMENTS AND RUN-ONS is designed to help students differentiate between run-on sentences and fragments. These two errors are among the most common problems in writing, and they are found in writers of all ages.

The daily lessons and exercises in *Ten Days to A+ Grammar: Fragments and Run-ons* are carefully designed to build upon each other. Rather than overwhelming students with a list of rules, the lessons introduce rules and concepts a few at a time, and in an order designed to build understanding. Individual and group activities help reinforce the concepts.

Many students are often baffled and turned off when lessons begin with a great deal of grammatical terminology. Therefore, terminology is used sparingly and woven in over the course of the lessons. Some familiarity with subjects, predicates, punctuation, parts of speech, etc., is assumed. The purpose of the packet is to help students write complete, correctly punctuated sentences—not to memorize terms.

Many students don't really see the difference between a fragment, a sentence, and a run-on. *Ten Days to A+ Grammar: Fragments and Run-ons* covers the most-common errors that students will make, and it introduces some of the more uncommon ones. It does not, however, try to cover every obscure possibility that might come up in writing. Supplying rules for every eventuality is likely to only confuse students and is beyond the scope of this ten-day Unit.

The quizzes are designed to be used within each lesson, but can easily be converted into homework assignments if time proves too short to include it in the day's work. In addition, some daily units include more exercises that most classes will be able to cover. The exercises can, therefore, be assigned as homework, extra credit, assignments for specific students who need extra help, etc.

Quizzes, reviews, exercises, and answer keys are all on separate pages, which allows you to copy and distribute the work. If you find yourself with some time remaining at the end of either portion of the guide, use one of the extra tests we have supplied.

Finally, *Ten Days to A+ Grammar: Fragments and Run-ons* keeps writing in mind. The exercises involve students in writing and manipulating sentences, helping them to build their skills, confidently recognize and correct fragments and run-ons, and write complete, correctly punctuated sentences of their own. The varied exercises help students see the power and flexibility of the English language.

The packet contents, at a glance:

1. Pretest and "Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?"
2. Helping students hear the difference between a fragment and a sentence
3. Helping students recognize three common kinds of fragments and understand how to fix them
4. Helping students understand that dependent clauses are fragments if not accompanied by an independent clause
5. Helping students understand how "ing" words often play a role in sentence fragments
6. Review game
7. Introducing myths about run-on sentences and helping students learn that a comma alone cannot separate two independent clauses
8. Helping students understand how to use a semicolon to correct a run-on and helping them understand when very long sentences are not run-ons
9. Reviewing fragments and run-ons
10. Final Test

## DAY #1: Teacher Instructions

### Objectives:

- To assess student ability to recognize complete sentences, fragments, and run-ons.
- To give students a quick overview of what they will be studying for the next ten days.
- To help students understand the importance of writing well.

### Activities:

1. **Pretest.** Give the pretest: “Fragments, Sentences, and Run-ons.”
2. **Overview.** After students finish the pretest, explain that even fairly experienced writers sometimes accidentally write fragments or run-ons—two of the most common problems in writing.

Give a brief overview of what will happen over the next ten days. Students will be learning how to recognize and correct sentence fragments and run-on sentences. In the process, they will be polishing their ability to write complete sentences. On the tenth day, they will take a follow-up test to see how much they have improved.

3. **Lesson.** Present “Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.
4. **Test review.** If time allows, you may want to quickly go over the correct answers to the pretest, projecting the test for all to see. The test should take approximately 25 minutes, allowing you time to go over it by having student score another student’s test. Remind classes that they will want to keep these tests to see their improvement in two weeks on the post-test.
5. **Assessment.** Grade the pretests. Did students score higher than you thought they would? If so, you might want to complete this unit in fewer than ten days. Did they do poorly on the test, as a group? If so, you will likely want to complete all ten days of lessons. One of the benefits of Fragments and Run-ons is that students aren’t just learning about fragments and run-ons. They are improving their ability to write varied, complete sentences in many patterns. By encouraging creativity and a bit of fun with some of the sentence-writing activities, more advanced students can stretch themselves while slower students get the practice they need.

**DAY # 1: Lesson**

**“Why Do We Have to Learn This Stuff?”**

There are many, many answers to the question, “How come we have to learn this stuff?” Here’s just one answer, for today: It will help you become a competent writer.

Why do you need to become a competent writer? There is a great likelihood that writing well is a skill you will need as an adult.

Many of you may be thinking to yourself, “But I know I’m not going to need to write well, not with what I want to do.”

How do you know? Do you know everything about your future? When you were younger, did you know how you would be right now? Have you known everything about your future up to this time? The truth is that a huge number of the jobs available today involve writing. In fact, one study reported that two-thirds of salaried workers in large U.S. companies have jobs that require writing.\* Two-thirds!

According to the same study, U.S. employers complain that a third of workers don’t meet the writing requirements needed for their positions. If you are not competent as a writer, that lack of ability can definitely hold you back.

Yes, it is true that many people do just fine in life without being able to write well. Many more, however, find themselves handicapped. You can’t foresee the future. The more skills you have under your belt, the brighter your future is likely to be. Being able to write clearly and accurately is a fundamental tool that will give you more choices in life and might also earn you more money, no matter what job you have.

\* the College Board’s National Commission on Writing

## **DAY #2: Teacher Instructions**

### **Objectives:**

- To introduce students to the idea that they can probably learn to recognize sentence fragments by hearing them.
- To help students see that they likely know a lot already about how to correct sentence fragments, even if they don't understand the process in grammatical terms.

### **Activities:**

1. **Lesson.** Present the lesson: “The Truth About Sentence Fragments.” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.
2. **Practice.** Work with the class as a whole to correct the three sentence fragments in “Exercise A” orally. Call on various students, and encourage the class to think creatively to come up with different ways to correct the fragments. They should correct each fragment in at least three different ways.

Have students complete “Exercise B” individually. Collect their work, and then have students share possible answers.

## DAY #2: Lesson

### The Truth About Sentence Fragments

If you are like most students, you have probably heard English teachers complaining about sentence fragments. Teachers hate sentence fragments, at least when they show up on papers.

It's not because sentence fragments are always wrong. The truth is that sentence fragments appear in some of the greatest novels ever written. Sometimes, in fact, a sentence fragment can actually be very effective.

The trick is in knowing what you're doing. You can be sure that great writers know the difference between a sentence fragment and a complete sentence. They are choosing to use a fragment for effect. That's a lot different than using a sentence fragment because you don't recognize one when you see one. It's different from using one because you don't have control over your own writing. Many students have a hard time recognizing sentence fragments and, therefore, they use them accidentally.

**So what is a sentence fragment?** You probably know that a sentence fragment is a piece of a sentence, an incomplete sentence. But that doesn't mean it's necessarily short. In fact, a sentence fragment can actually be quite long.

#### Examples:

*After the mathematician posted a difficult logic puzzle on his blog and challenged readers all over the world to try to solve it within thirty days.*

*Many times during the night, throughout the next day, and lasting until supper.*

*When you get over being angry at the grade you received in the math quiz because you didn't have enough time to study when you got out of the hospital.*

You probably know that a sentence fragment is missing something important—a subject or a verb. But that doesn't mean everything with a subject and a verb is a sentence. You may see both in a dependent clause, for example, but a dependent clause is not a sentence.

#### Examples:

*Because she actually bought the Bike herself.*

*When Dallas saw what had happened to his motorcycle.*

You have probably heard that a sentence fragment doesn't express a complete thought. While that is true in one sense, "complete" is pretty hard to define. Many perfectly good sentences express a thought that most of us would not regard as complete at all.

#### Example:

*The face outside the dark window suddenly grew closer, and then we heard a terrible scream.*

What happened next? Whose face was it? Who screamed? The example is a complete sentence, even though it is not complete in every sense of the word. "Complete" doesn't mean that the sentence tells you everything there is to know.

## **DAY #3: Teacher Instructions**

### **Objective:**

- To help students recognize and correct three common kinds of fragments.

### **Activities:**

1. **Lesson.** Present the lesson, “Three Kinds of Sentence Fragments.” You might present the material in the lesson in your own words, project the page for the class to see (overhead projector, interactive whiteboard, etc.), or photocopy the material and have students read along as you go over it.
2. **Practice.** Project a copy of “Something Outside” for all to see. Give students a few minutes to determine which sentences in the paragraph are complete sentences. After they write down these sentences, see how they did.

Follow up by having students rewrite the paragraph so that it does not include any sentence fragments, adding information as necessary. This is a good opportunity to point out that specific details really add life to writing, and you should encourage students to try to make the paragraph as interesting as possible. You might want to have students make the corrections individually as homework, or they could work in small groups to turn in one group correction.

Another possibility, one that cuts down on papers to grade, is to complete the activity as a class. Go through the paragraph, one sentence at a time. After each fragment, have students work individually to correct the fragment. Call on various students to read their correction aloud. Then, continue with the next sentence. You might even want to choose one answer as the “class answer” each time, building the story and having subsequent sentence corrections build off the previous sentences. At the end, you will have a class-created paragraph that should be not only correct, but also much more interesting than the original paragraph.



## DAY #3: Lesson

### Three Kinds of Fragments

Most sentence fragments fall into three categories:

**Punctuation error.** Often, a sentence fragment is the result of a simple mistake in punctuation. The writer uses a period before the sentence is really finished, and what's left over forms a fragment.

**Examples:**

*Clarke took off early. Leaving Ira with the bill.*

*Tessa is a genius in algebra. Which is why everyone is always asking her for help.*

*Dawson's brother had a fondness for anything fattening. Such as greasy hamburgers, slabs of pizza, and ice cream slathered in hot fudge sauce.*

What is wrong with each pair? How would you fix these fragments?

**Possible answers:**

*Clarke took off early, leaving Ira with the bill.*

*Tessa is a genius in algebra, which is why everyone is always asking her for help.*

*Dawson's brother had a fondness for anything fattening, such as greasy hamburgers, slabs of pizza, and ice cream slathered in hot fudge sauce.*

The first part of each example is a sentence, but the second adds information to the first in the form of a fragment. The two need to be connected.

**Missing verb.** Another common sentence fragment is missing a verb or predicate.

**Examples:**

*The capital of New Jersey.*

*The goldfish in the little jar on the counter.*

*The noisy children in the daycare center down the block.*

How would you fix these fragments?

**Possible answers:**

*The capital of New Jersey is Trenton.*

*The goldfish in the little jar on the counter is hungry.*

*The noisy children in the daycare center down the block suddenly got quiet.*

## **DAY #4: Teacher Instructions**

### **Objectives:**

- To help students understand that dependent clauses are not sentences.
- To help students learn to correct sentence fragments that are dependent clauses

### **Activities:**

1. **Lesson.** Present the lesson “Words that Turn Perfectly Good Sentences into Fragments.”
2. **Practice.** Complete “Exercise #1” and “Exercise #2” with students. Go over the instructions for “One Word Can Change Everything” and allow students to start working. Have students complete the assignment for homework.

**DAY #4: Lesson****Words That Turn Perfectly Good Sentences into Fragments**

One word can change everything. Here are five perfectly good sentences:

*The kindergartner was excited about going to school.*  
*George Washington became president in 1789.*  
*Miss Smithers loves cats a lot.*  
*The three guys watched the football game.*  
*His computer froze again.*

Listen to how one the addition of one word to the beginning makes them all sound unfinished:

*Because the kindergartner was excited about going to school....*  
*After George Washington became president in 1789....*  
*Because Miss Smithers loves cats a lot....*  
*While the three guys watched the football game....*  
*When his computer froze again....*

Each of the items is now a fragment. The addition of one word has changed each into a dependent clause that depends on something else to finish it. It's odd how adding something turns a sentence into a fragment, but that's what can happen. A few common words that introduce dependent clauses are listed in the box that follows.

after	before	until
although	if	when
as	since	whenever
because	unless	while

**Exercise #1.** Add an independent clause (a complete sentence) to each of the fragments above.

**Examples:**

*Because the kindergartner was excited about going to school, he got ready to go at 5:00 a.m.*  
*After George Washington became president in 1789, he usually ignored his earlier role as a general.*  
*Because Miss Smithers loves cats a lot, she is known as the neighborhood "Cat Lady."*  
*While the three men watched the football game, their children were actually playing football in the yard.*  
*When his computer froze again, Terry became angry and started yelling at it.*