

**GRAMMAR FOR COLLEGE WRITING**  
**by Mary Applegate**

# Tips for editing your grammar

- Put your paper away for at least an hour before proofreading it.
- Read the words on your paper copy, not the screen.
- Read the words on your paper OUT LOUD and SLOWLY.
- Read exactly what's there.
- Isolate each sentence by hitting the “enter” key, print, and read.
- Read each sentence starting with the last one.

## Use a reference book (e.g., Hacker)

- Look up subtopics you have trouble with:
  - ✓ fragments
  - ✓ fused sentences (run-on sentences)
  - ✓ sentence structure (awkward phrasing)

# How can you tell if a sentence is a fragment?

A sentence contains each of the following:

- Subject
- Verb
- “complete thought” (e.g., The sentence makes sense by itself)

A fragment is missing one or more of these.

## QUICK QUIZ:

**Are these complete sentences or fragments?**

The elementary school teacher worked carefully with all the students. Especially those who were hearing the material for the first time. The students all seemed to perform well. Although there was no test. Many students had already learned this material at home from their parents or older brothers and sisters. Many had not.

**\*See answers and explanations on next slide.**

## ANSWERS TO QUICK QUIZ:

### Are these complete sentences or fragments?

Fragment: Especially those who were hearing the material for the first time.

Explanation: Ask yourself, “**WHAT ABOUT** especially those who were hearing the material for the first time?” Since this sentence is incomplete, you have a fragment.

Fragment: Although there was no test.

Explanation: Ask yourself, “**WHAT ABOUT** although there was no test.” Since this sentence is incomplete, you have a fragment.

NOTE: The last sentence (“Many had not.”) is a complete sentence because it is assumed that “many” takes the place of “students.” Therefore, there is a subject, a verb, and a complete thought.

# How can you tell if a sentence is a run-on ?

A sentence is a run-on if it contains more than one independent clause (complete sentence) without proper punctuation.

Example: It is very cold outside today I wish I were at home painting.

Explanation: This sentence is a run-on because it contains two sentences without proper punctuation.

# How to correct a run-on sentence

- 1.) Create two sentences.
- 2.) Place a coordinate conjunction (and, but, or, nor, so, for, yet) between the two sentences preceded by a comma.
3. Use a semi colon. This can be followed by a transitional word and a comma (therefore, however, furthermore), etc.
4. Use a subordinate conjunction (if, since, because).



## QUICK QUIZ:

### **Are these correct sentences or run-ons?**

I went to the bank yesterday to deposit my money later fifty dollars was missing from my wallet. Having looked in my purse and all over the house for that \$50 bill, I realized I must have left it on the counter. Therefore, I returned to the bank today to ask the teller if she had seen my money, and if I could still claim it. Perhaps I had dropped the bill on the floor, and some honest person had picked it up and turned it in, or maybe some dishonest person had picked it up and spent it! I was a wreck, after all this money was going toward my rent. Fortunately, when I went back today, the teller remembered me and gave me the fifty dollars.

**\*See answers and explanations on next slide.**

## ANSWERS TO QUICK QUIZ:

### Are these correct sentences or run-ons?

Run-on: I went to the bank yesterday to deposit my money later fifty dollars was missing from my wallet.

Corrected: I went to the bank yesterday to deposit my money. Later fifty dollars was missing from my wallet. (There are other possibilities.)

Run-on: I was a wreck, after all this money was going toward my rent.

Corrected: I was a wreck because after all this money was going toward my rent. (There are other possibilities.)

**NOTE:** Placing a comma between two independent clauses does **NOT** correct a run-on.

# What is good sentence structure?

Good sentence structure means your sentences are written clearly and correctly so the reader can understand them. For this to occur, you must select your words carefully and place them in the correct order in each sentence. If your sentences sound awkward or confusing when *you* reread them, they will also sound awkward or confusing to your reader.

**EDIT, EDIT, EDIT!**

## QUICK QUIZ:

### How can you change the sentence structure in the following sentences to make them clear?

1. Even though John's father was a dentist, yet John almost never brushed his teeth.
2. Early detection of flu symptoms is frequently curable.
3. Asthma is a disorder where people have trouble breathing in certain circumstances that impairs functioning on a daily basis.
4. A nurse, the career many students hope to have, generally works long and difficult hours.
5. Climbing the stairs, a way for people to get exercise, without having to work too hard.
6. By editing your work, it's making you have less mistakes in your paper.
7. Depending on whether it snows tonight will determine if we can go skiing tomorrow.
8. While we were eating ants marched along.

**\*See answers and explanations on next two slides.**

# ANSWERS TO QUICK QUIZ:

## How can you change the sentence structure in the following sentences to make them clear?

- 1.) Original: Even though John's father was a dentist, yet John almost never brushed his teeth.  
Corrected: Even though John's father was a dentist, John almost never brushed his teeth.  
Explanation: When you use "even though," don't use "yet" or your sentence will be confusing.
- 2.) Original: Early detection of flu symptoms is frequently curable.  
Corrected: Flu symptoms are frequently curable when detected early.  
Explanation: In the original sentence, it sounds like early detection is curable when you meant symptoms are curable.
- 3.) Original: Asthma is a disorder where people have trouble breathing in certain circumstances that impairs functioning on a daily basis.  
Corrected: Asthma is a disorder that impairs functioning on a daily basis.  
Explanation: In the original sentence, it sounds like circumstances impair functioning when you mean asthma impairs functioning.
- 4.) Original: A nurse, the career many students hope to have, generally works long and difficult hours.  
Corrected: A nurse generally works long and difficult hours.  
Explanation: In the original sentence, it sounds like a nurse is a career when you meant to say was that a nurse works long and difficult hours.

## ANSWERS TO QUICK QUIZ (continued)

### How can you change the sentence structure in the following sentences to make them clear?

- 5.) Original: Climbing the stairs, a way for people to get exercise, without having to work too hard.  
Corrected: Climbing the stairs is a way for people to get exercise.  
Explanation: The original sentence was a fragment because there is no verb, and it is incoherent.
- 6.) Original: By editing your work, it's making you have less mistakes in your paper.  
Corrected: Editing your work results in having fewer mistakes in your paper.  
Explanation: Don't begin a sentence with "By" unless you're using it as a preposition (e.g., by the way, by the river, etc.). "Results" is more accurate and more academic than "it's making." If you can count it, use "fewer." If you can't count it, use "less."
- 7.) Original: Depending on whether it snows tonight will determine if we can go skiing tomorrow.  
Corrected: Whether it snows tonight will determine if we can go skiing tomorrow.  
Explanation: "Whether..." is generally the same as "Depending on," so don't use both in a sentence.
- 8.) Original: While we were eating ants marched along.  
Corrected: Ants marched in front of us while we ate lunch at the picnic.  
Explanation: The original sentence sounds like we might have been eating ants. (Yuck!) Also, there was no context provided for understanding the sentence.