Proofreading your work takes additional time, but in the end, it usually results in a finer, more error-free product. If you know something about the most common errors in writing, you can more effectively eliminate them from your own work as you proofread. In this chapter you will examine the most prevalent sentence faults and be given guidelines for repairing them.

### 4.1 Fragments and Run-ons

Hasty writers sometimes omit crucial words, punctuate awkwardly, or leave their thoughts unfinished. All these mistakes contribute to two of the most common sentence errors: fragments and run-on sentences.

#### Fragments

Though established writers may use fragments purposefully for a stylistic effect, fragments are generally considered a writing error. This is especially true when fragments are used unintentionally. Most fragments in writing are phrases, subordinate clauses, or words in a series punctuated as if they were complete sentences.

Do not unintentionally capitalize and punctuate phrases, subordinate clauses, or words in a series as if they were complete sentences.

If you have a problem with fragments, reading your work aloud will help you hear where your sentences actually begin and end. By listening to the natural pauses and stops, you should easily be able to identify awkward passages that need revision.

Sometimes, repairing a fragment will merely involve connecting it to words that come before or after it. Other fragments may require more work, such as rearranging, adding, or omitting words. The following chart shows some of the types of fragments you may encounter (italicized in the second column), as well as different methods for correcting them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHRASE FRAGMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositional phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appositive phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participial phrase with pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerund phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infinitive phrase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLAUSE FRAGMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjective clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noun clause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If a series of words seems long enough to constitute a sentence, check it to make sure that it contains a subject and a verb and expresses a complete thought. It may be a long fragment masquerading as a complete sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERIES FRAGMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fragment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Steinbeck's novel, <em>The Pearl</em>, with its sensitive, yet probing look at poverty and greed in the writing style so typical of this master storyteller.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXERCISE A:** Identifying and Correcting Fragments. Read each of the following items. If the words form one or more complete sentences, write complete on your paper. If the item contains a fragment, rewrite it to make one or more complete sentences. (Some items contain both a complete sentence and a fragment.)

1. Their faces shining with delight at seeing the popular star.
2. I wanted one thing. To take a long nap.
3. The committee was impressed by this application. Which we received just yesterday.
4. I enjoy working with my hands.
5. Traffic lights flashing erratically as the cars jammed in the intersection, unsure whose turn it was to proceed.
6. The apples cooked. With their sweet juices bubbling away.
7. Just as Mr. Chao said goodbye.
8. Classified ads filling the pages of the newspaper.
9. A report to write and math homework to do before tomorrow.
10. The stark silhouettes of the trees against the light of the moon.

**Run-on Sentences**

A run-on sentence, often simply called a run-on, is two or more sentences that are capitalized and punctuated as if they were one.

Use punctuation, conjunctions, or other means to join or separate the parts of a run-on sentence correctly.

There are two kinds of run-ons: *fused sentences*, which are two or more sentences joined with no punctuation, and *comma splices*, which have two or more sentences separated only by commas rather than by commas and conjunctions.

**FUSED SENTENCE:** The team pushed forward for the last yard they were inches short.

**COMMA SPLICE:** Only one package arrived in the mail, the other items never came.

As with fragments, proofreading or reading your work aloud will usually help you find any run-on sentences in your writing. Once found, they can be corrected by adding punctuation and conjunctions or by rewording the sentence. The following chart demonstrates the various methods for correcting run-ons.

**FOUR WAYS TO CORRECT RUN-ONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>With End Marks and Capitals</strong></th>
<th><strong>With Commas and Conjunctions</strong></th>
<th><strong>With Semicolons</strong></th>
<th><strong>By Rewriting</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Run-on:</strong></td>
<td>The sale was in full swing in the store people crowded the aisles.</td>
<td><strong>Sentence:</strong> The sale was in full swing. In the store, people crowded the aisles.</td>
<td><strong>Run-on:</strong> The wrapping paper needed cutting we could not locate the scissors.</td>
<td><strong>Sentence:</strong> The wrapping paper needed cutting, but we could not locate the scissors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Run-on:</strong></td>
<td>Our zoo has acquired many rare animals, for example, it now has a pair of pandas.</td>
<td><strong>Sentence:</strong> Our zoo has acquired many rare animals; for example, it now has a pair of pandas.</td>
<td><strong>Run-on:</strong> The horse show began late, someone had misplaced the registration forms.</td>
<td><strong>Sentence:</strong> The horse show began late because someone had misplaced the registration forms. (Revised into a complex sentence.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Run-on:</strong></td>
<td>We replaced the sparkplugs, the filter was also bad.</td>
<td><strong>Sentence:</strong> We replaced the bad sparkplugs and filter. (Revised into a simple sentence with a compound direct object.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXERCISE B: Identifying and Correcting Run-on Sentences. Some of the following sentences are correct; others are run-ons. Write complete on your paper if the sentence is correct as written. If it is a run-on, correct it. Use each of the four methods for correcting run-ons at least twice.

1. I looked down the well was apparently dry.
2. We read the Preamble to the Constitution, our group felt anew the power of those words.
3. What a beautiful garden on the right the hedge has been shaped into mythical creatures.
4. During my free period I wanted to rest my busy schedule would not give me time later.
5. I mislaid my car keys, my house keys were also gone.
6. We admired the Wedgwood its delicate motifs on the blue background made it a beautiful ornament.
7. Talia threw away the check, but she eventually recovered it.
8. I generally liked the climate of the area where I lived I did not enjoy the subfreezing temperatures of winter.
9. Everyone should know simple courtesies, however the number of rude people proves that many do not.
10. I concocted my own spicy chili to eat it one needs an iron stomach.
11. The boy had trouble with the decimal point when multiplying a problem he always put it in the wrong place.
12. A furrier in New York was robbed; the alarm system had been professionally deactivated.
13. During natural disasters, the Red Cross provides aid, it gives food, blankets, and emergency care to the victims.
14. The thermometer broke, the mercury spilled onto the floor.
15. The fortress had stood impregnable for decades no marauding forces had broken through its walls.
16. It is expressly forbidden by law to litter freeways, nevertheless, they are covered by paper.
17. The peacock spread his feathers, and with pride he paraded in front of the hen.
18. Overalls have been popular recently many high school and college students wear them.
19. My cousin has bowled a perfect game once in his life; his teammate has also.
20. Riding a rickshaw in the Orient was more frightening than driving a car, we careened around corners and wound our way through the rush of traffic.

APPLICATION: Locating and Correcting Fragments and Run-ons. The following selection contains some fragments and run-ons. Write correct on your paper if the numbered sequence contains no errors. If it does contain an error, correct the sentence.

(1) Mosquitoes, those nasty little insects whose bites cause our skin to swell and itch. (2) They inhabit every state in the Union and most areas of the world. (3) Actually the bites should not be considered mere irritants they lead to many deaths every year. (4) These insects transmit many ailments. (5) Temporary insanity, filariasis, and many types of viral and bacterial infections. (6) Of course, mosquitoes must bite to survive, the females need the protein from the blood to produce their eggs. (7) The females weighing one ten-thousandth of an ounce when unfed and tripling that after a single bite. (8) One of nature’s greatest achievements, the two intricate pumps inside the female’s head. (9) They draw the blood to produce seventy-five eggs, only one bite is necessary. (10) Much has been done to halt the growth of mosquitoes, nothing, however, has been discovered that completely eradicates these insects.

Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

4.2

To insure logical sentence construction and clear writing, careful writers put modifiers as close as possible to the words they modify. When modifiers are misplaced or left dangling, the result is often ludicrous or hopelessly confusing. This section will show you methods for correcting these errors.

Misplaced Modifiers

Misplaced modifiers occur when the modifier is placed too far from the word it should modify.

A misplaced modifier seems to modify the wrong word in the sentence.

Any phrase or clause that acts as an adjective or adverb can unintentionally be misplaced in a sentence.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS: A bicyclist ran into a fence riding in the race.

We heard the telephone ring while watching TV.