

# Independent and Dependent Clauses

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**An independent sentence has a subject and a verb.**

- “She writes.” *She* is the subject, and *writes* is the verb.

**Longer sentences have a subject, a verb, a direct object, and maybe an indirect object.**

- “She wrote her friend an email.”
  - The subject of the sentence is *she*.
  - The verb is *wrote*.
  - The direct object is *email* because *email* is the noun to which the action of the verb applies.
  - The indirect object is *friend* because the action of the verb indirectly applies to *friend*.

**Some sentences may have a dependent clause with the independent clause.**

- “Although she loved pizza, she chose to eat a salad.”
  - The clause “she chose to eat a salad” is independent because it has both a subject and a verb.
  - “Although she loved pizza” is a dependent clause. It needs an independent clause to make sense.

**If the subject or the verb is missing, the sentence is dependent or a fragment.** To identify a fragment, imagine that all the other words around your sentence have vanished. Does it still make sense? A dependent clause depends on an independent clause to make sense.

**Sometimes a clause has what sounds like a subject and a verb but is made dependent by certain words.** Some words that often introduce dependent clauses are:

after	although	because	before	if	that	though
unless	until	when	where	which	who	

**If a fragment is missing a subject or verb, add it.** They add important information to the sentence.

- **Incorrect:** “Uses vivid language to symbolize self-torture and madness.” This fragment is missing a subject and context.
  - **Correct:** “Poe’s ‘The Raven’ uses vivid language to symbolize self-torture and madness.”
    - We introduced the poem and its author. “Poe’s ‘The Raven’” becomes the subject of the sentence and adds context.
- **Incorrect:** “The woman who was wearing a red dress.” This sentence is missing a verb to tell us what the woman in the red dress did.
  - **Correct:** “The woman who was wearing a red dress ran across the road.”
    - We added the verb phrase, “ran across the road,” to show what the woman in the red dress did.

### Sometimes the best way to fix a fragment is to attach it to an independent clause.

- **Incorrect:** “PVCC offers several majors. **Such as nursing, liberal arts, and science.**” The fragment (in bold) is only a list of nouns.
  - **Correct:** “PVCC offers several majors, such as nursing, liberal arts, and science.”
    - We replaced the period with a comma, attaching it to the independent clause before it.
- **Incorrect:** “The cackling crocodiles are noisy. **Which is why I believe that we need to outlaw crocodiles.**” The phrase “Which is why” makes this clause dependent.
  - **Correct:** “The cackling crocodiles are noisy, and I believe this is why we need to outlaw crocodiles.”
    - We added the word “and” and restated “why I believe” in different words.

Occasionally, writers will intentionally use fragments to give emphasis to their ideas. This primarily happens in creative writing. **The vast majority of writing that students do in college will NOT contain fragments.**

### A run-on sentence occurs when two independent clauses are joined incorrectly.

- A **comma splice** is when two independent clauses are joined by only a comma.
  - **Incorrect:** “Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* has been adapted many times, it has even been presented as a video blog on *Youtube*.”
- A **fused sentence** happens when two independent clauses are combined without any punctuation or conjunctions.
  - **Incorrect:** “Autumn came early this year the leaves were orange by October 1.”

### Run-on sentences can be corrected four different ways.

1. **Use a period to separate the clauses.** The period indicates that the sentences are two separate ideas.
  - “Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* has been adapted many times. It has even been presented as a video blog on *Youtube*.”
2. **Use a semicolon to combine the clauses.** The semicolon indicates that the ideas in the clauses are related but does not tell us how they are related.
  - “Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* has been adapted many times; it has even been presented as a video blog on *Youtube*.”
3. **Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction to indicate a specific relationship between the ideas.** The coordinating conjunctions are: **For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So** (FANBOYS).
  - “Autumn came early this year, so the leaves were orange by October 1.”
4. **Subordinate (make dependent) one clause and connect it to the independent clause.**
  - “Because autumn came early this year, the leaves were orange by October 1.”
  - “The leaves were orange by October 1 because autumn came early this year.”