Sentence Fragments

**Problem:** An incomplete sentence that is marked with a period is considered a *sentence fragment*. When a group of words is complex enough, it can sometimes seem like a complete sentence, even though it is not. Usually, people make sentence fragment errors when they don’t understand the basic rules of sentence patterns.

Sentence Fragment: As though she hadn’t even noticed.
Sentence Fragment: When they saw the surprise and laughed so hard they thought they’d choke.

**Solution:** Understand the difference between independent clauses, dependent clauses, and phrases.

1) Independent Clause: a group of words with a **subject** and **verb** that *can stand alone* as a sentence.

   Example: They went to the store after watching TV.
   Example: She wasn't true to him even though she loved him.
   Example: He was tired at the end of the day, but still he couldn’t sleep.

2) Dependent Clause: a group of words with a **subject** and **verb** that *cannot stand alone* as a sentence.

   Example: After we went to the store
   Example: Even while she was in love with him
   Example: Although the work was over and he was tired enough to sleep

3) Phrase: a group of words that may have a subject or verb, but not both. Therefore, it cannot stand alone as a sentence.

   Example: swan swimming in the water
   Example: behind the lion cage at the zoo
   Example: the most famous opera singer in the country
Solution: Understand how clauses and phrases combine into sentence patterns.

1) Compound Sentence = two or more independent clauses in one sentence. (They must be punctuated by a semicolon or comma and coordinating conjunction.)

   Example: The kids ran excitedly into the living room on Christmas morning, but they weren’t expecting the wonderful surprise they found there.

2) Complex Sentence: a sentence with one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

   Example: Sarah tore open the wrapping paper while John waited breathlessly.

3) Compound-Complex Sentence: a sentence with two or more independent clauses plus one or more dependent clauses.

   Example: When they saw the new puppy, Sarah cheered and John jumped up to hug her.